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Weird Tales

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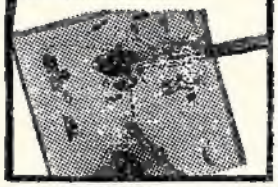

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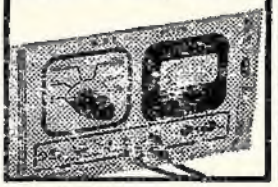

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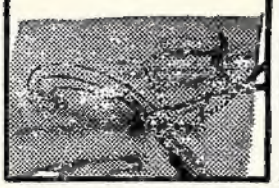

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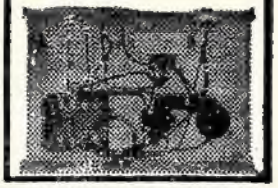

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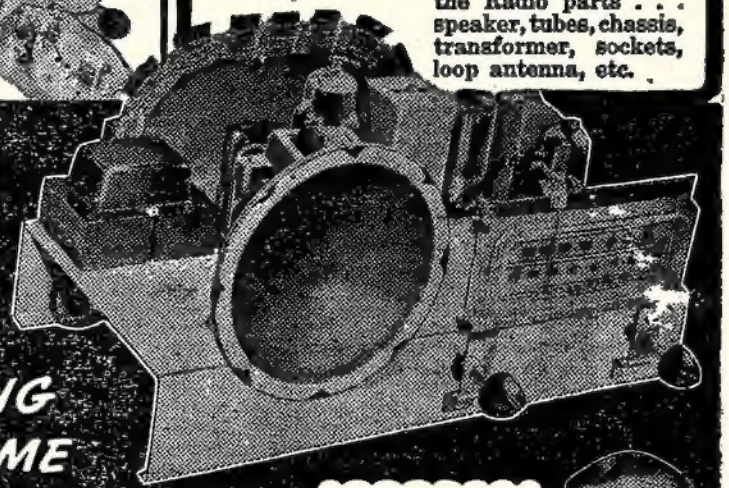

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Weird Tales

ALL STORIES NEW — NO REPRINTS

MARCH, 1949 Cover by Matt Fox

LONG NOVELETTE

THE TESTAMENT OF CLAIBORNE BOYD . . . . . August Derleth 58
"A peculiar record released for limited publication only after prolonged discussion among its custodians."

NOVELETTES

THE MARTIAN AND THE MORON . . . . . Theodore Sturgeon 6
When you find that one girl who's all the things you've wished for, watch out. It's too good to be so!

THE STRANGE ISLAND OF DR. NORK . . . . . Robert Bloch 22
An island stranger than the places men dream of— in their very darkest nightmares!

THE HOLIDAY . . . . . Allison V. Harding 46
You've said of some people "His life's just one great big holiday." But do you really know?

THE WIZARD OF BIRD-IN-HAND . . . . . Arthur J. Burks 79
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A strange boy, this one, who looked out of wise eyes at scenes we ordinary mortals know but in nightmares.

THE OTHER SANTA . . . . . Thorp McClusky 40
When the network idea-men get an idea, look out tradition! This tradition was Christmas, and Santa Claus was to be the star of the broadcast.

WEIRDISMS . . . . . Lee Brown Coye 21 and 57

WEIRD TALES CLUB 4

Except for personal experiences the contents of this magazine is fiction. Any use of the name of any living person or reference to actual events is purely coincidental.

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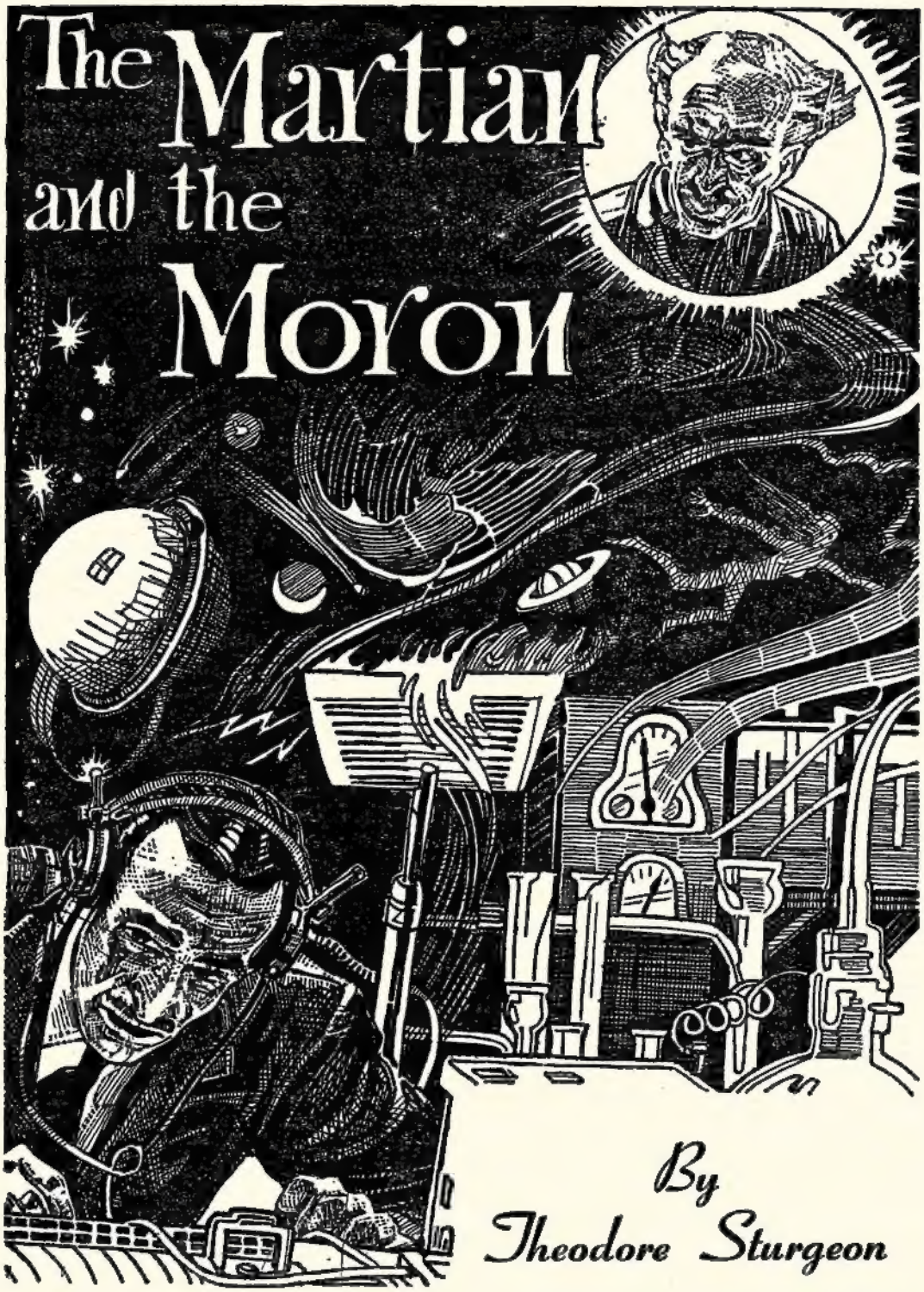

The Martian and the Moron

By Theodore Sturgeon

IN 1924, when I was just a pup, my father was a thing known currently as a "radio bug." These creatures were wonderful. They were one part fanatic, one part genius, a dash of child-like wonderment, and two buckets full of trial-and-error. Those were the days when you could get your picture in the paper for building

Heading by FRED HUMISTON

a crystal set in something small and more foolish than the character who had his picture in the paper the day before. My father had his picture in there for building a "set" on a pencil eraser with a hunk of galena in the top and about four thousand turns of No. 35 enamelled wire wrapped around it. When they came around to take his picture he dragged out another one built into a peanut. Yes, a real peanut which brought in WGBS, New York. (You see, I really do remember.) They wanted to photograph that too, but Dad thought it would be a little immodest for him to be in the paper twice. So they took Mother's picture with it. The following week they ran both pictures, and Dad got two letters from other radio bugs saying his eraser radio wouldn't work and Mother got two hundred and twenty letters forwarded from the paper, twenty-six of which contained proposals of marriage. (Of course Mother was a YL and not an OW then.)

Oddly enough, Dad never did become a radio ham. He seemed satisfied to be the first in the neighborhood to own a set, then to build a set—(after the spiderweb coil phase he built and operated a one-tube re-

She was too good to be true; which was just about it

generative set which featured a UX-11 detector and a thing called a vario-coupler which looked like a greasy fist within a lacquered hand, and reached his triumph when he hooked it into a forty-'leven pound "B-eliminator" and ran it right out of the socket like a four-hundred-dollar "electric" radio) and first in the state to be on the receiving end of a court-order restraining him from using his equipment (every time he touched the tuning dials—three—the neighboring radios with which Joneses were keeping up with each other, began howling unmercifully). So for a time he left his clutter of forms and wire and solder-spattered "bathtub" condensers shoved to the back of his cellar workbench, and went back to stuffing field-mice and bats, which had been his original hobby. I think Mother was glad, though she hated the smells he made down there. That was after the night she went to bed early with the cramps, and he DX'd WLS in Chicago at 4:30 one morning with a crystal set, and wanted to dance. (He learned later that he had crossed aerials with Mr. Bohakus next door, and had swiped Mr. Bohackus' fourteen-tube Atwater-Kent signal right out of Mr. Bohackus' goose-neck megaphone speaker. Mr. Bohackus was just as unhappy as Mother to hear about this on the following morning. They had both been up all night.)

Dad never was one to have his leg pulled. He got very sensitive about the whole thing, and learned his lesson so well that when the last great radio fever took him, he went to another extreme. Instead of talking his progress all over the house and lot, he walled himself up. During the late war I ran up against security regulations—and who didn't—but they never bothered me. I had my training early.

He got that glint in his eye after grunting loudly over the evening paper one night. I remember Mother's asking him about it twice, and I remember her sigh—her famous "here we go again" sigh—when he didn't answer. He leapt up, folded the paper, got out his keys, opened the safe, put the paper in it, locked the safe, put his keys away, looked knowingly at us, strode out of the room, went down into the cellar, came up from the cellar, took out his keys, opened the safe, took out the paper, closed the safe, looked knowingly at us again, said, "Henry, your father's going to be famous," and went down into the cellar.

Mother said, "I knew it. I *knew* it! I should have thrown the paper away. Or torn out that page."

"What's he going to make, Mother?" I asked.

"Heaven knows," she sighed. "Some men are going to try to get Mars on the radio."

"Mars? You mean the star?"

"It isn't a star, dear, it's a planet. They've arranged to turn off all the big radio stations all over the world for five minutes every hour so the men can listen to Mars. I suppose your father thinks he can listen too."

"Ge," I said, "I'm going down and—"

"You're going to do no such thing," said Mother firmly. "Get yourself all covered with that nasty grease he uses in his soldering, and stay up until all hours! It's almost bedtime. And—Henry—"

"Yes, Mother?"

She put her hands on my shoulders. "Listen to me, darling. People have been—ah—teasing your father." She meant Mr. Bohackus. "Don't ask him any questions about this if he doesn't want to talk, will you, darling? Promise?"

"All right, Mother." She was a wise woman.

Dad bought a big shiny brass padlock for his work-shop in the cellar, and every time Mother mentioned the cellar, or the stars, or radio to him in any connection, he would just smile knowingly at her. It drove her wild. She didn't like the key, either. It was a big brass key, and he wore it on a length of rawhide shoelace tied around his neck. He wore it day and night. Mother said it was lumpy. She also said it was dangerous, which he denied, even after the time down at Roton Point when we were running Mr. Bohackus' new gasoline-driven ice-cream freezer out on the beach. Dad leaned over to watch it working. He said, "This is the way to get things done, all right. I can't wait to get into that ice-cream," and next thing we knew he was face down in the brine and flopping like a banked trout. We got him out before he

drowned or froze. He was bleeding freely about the nose and lips, and Mr. Bohackus was displeased because Dad's key had, in passing through the spur-gears in which it had caught, broken off nine teeth. That was six more than Dad lost, but it cost much more to fix Dad's and showed, Mother said, just how narrow-minded Mr. Bohackus was.

Anyway, Dad never would tell us what he was doing down in the cellar. He would arrive home from work with mysterious packages and go below and lock them up before dinner. He would eat abstractedly and disappear for the whole evening. Mother, bless her, bore it with fortitude. As a matter of fact, I think she encouraged it. It was better than the previous fevers, when she had to sit for hours listeneng to crackling noises and organ music through big, heavy, magnetic earphones—or else. At least she was left to her own devises while all this was going on. As for me, I knew when I wasn't needed, and, as I remember, managed to fill my life quite successfully with clock movements, school, and baseball, and ceased to wonder very much.

About the middle of August Dad began to look frantic. Twice he worked right through the night, and though he went to the office on the days that followed, I doubt that he did much. On August 21—I memember the date because it was the day befort my birthday, and I memember that is was a Thursday because Dad took the next day off for a "long weekend", so *it* must have been Friday—the crisis came. My bed-time was nine o'clock. At nine-twenty Dad came storming up from the cellar and demanded that I get my clothes on instantly and go out and get him two hundred feet of No. 27 silk-covered wire. Mother laid down the law and was instantly overridden. "The coil! The one coil I haven't finished!" he shouted hysterically. "Six thousand meters, and I have to run out of it. *Get* your clothes on this instant, Henry, number twenty-seven wire. Just control yourself this once Mother and you can have Henry stop standing there with your silly eyes bulging and get dressed you can have any hat on Fifth Avenue *hurry*!"

I hurried. Dad gave me some money and a list of places to go to, told me not to come back until I'd tried every one of them, and left the house with me. I went east, he went west. Mother stood on the porch and wrung her hands.

I got home about twenty after ten, weary and excited, bearing a large metal spool of wire. I put it down triumphantly while Mother caught me up and felt me all over as if she had picked me up at the foot of a cliff. She looked drawn. Dad wasn't home yet.

After she quieted down a little she took me into the kitchen and fed me some chocolate-covered doughnuts. I forget what we talked about, if we talked, but I do remember that the cellar door was ajar, and at the bottom of the steps I could see a ray of yellow light. "Mother," I said, "you know what? Dad ran out and left his workshop open."

She went to the door and looked down the stairs.

"Darling," she said after a bit, "Uh—wouldn't you like to—I mean, if he—"

I caught on quick. "I'll look. Will you stay up here and bump on the floor if he comes?

She looked relieved, and nodded. I ran down the steps and cautiously entered the little shop.

LINED up across the bench were no less than six of the one-tube receivers which were the pinnacle of Dad's electronic achievment. The one at the end was turned back-to-front and had its rear shielding off; a naked coil-form dangled unashamedly out.

And I saw what had happened to the two alarm clocks which had disappeared from the bedrooms in the past six weeks. It happened that then, as now, clocks were my passion, and I can remember clearly the way he had set up pieces of the movements.

He had built a frame about four feet long on a shelf at right angles to the bench on which the radios rested. At one end of the frame was a clock mechanism designed to turn a reel on which was an endless band of paper tape about eight inches wide. The tape passed under a hooded camera—Mother's old Brownie—which was on a wall-

bracket and aimed downward, on the tape. Next in line, under the tape, were six earphones, so placed that their diaphragms (the retainers had been removed) just touched the under side of the tape. And at the other end of the frame was the movement from the second alarm clock. The bell-clapper hung downwards, and attached to it was a small container of black powder.

I went to the first clock mechanism and started it by pulling out the toothpick Dad had jammed in the gears. The tape began to move. I pulled the plug on the other movement. The little container of black powder began to shake like mad and, through small holes, laid an even film of the powder over the moving tape. It stopped when it had put down about ten inches of it. The black line moved slowly across until it was over the phones. The magnets smeared the powder, which I recognized thereby as iron filings. Bending to ueer under the tape, I saw that the whole bank of phones was levered to move downward a half an inch away from the tape. The leads from each of the six phones ran to a separate receiver.

I stood back and looked at this goldberg and scratched my head, then shook same and carefully blew away the black powder on the tape, rewound the movements, refilled the containers from a jar which stood on the bench, and put the toothpick back the way I had found it.

I was halfway up the stairs when the scream of burning rubber on the street outside coincided with Mother's sharp thumping on the floor. I got to her side as she reached the front window. Dad was outside paying off a taxi-driver. He never touched the porch steps at all, and came into the house at a dead run. He had a package under his arm.

"Fred!" said Mother.

"Can't stop now," he said, skidding into the hallway. "Couldn't get 27 anywhere. Have to use 25. Probably won't work. Everything happens to me absolutely everything." He headed for the kitchen.

"I got you a whole reel of 27, Dad."

"Don't bother me now. Tomorrow," he said, and thumped downstairs. Mother and I looked at each other. Mother sighed. Dad came bounding back up the stairs. "You *what?*"

"Here." I got the wire off the hall table and gave it to him. He snatched it up, hugged me, swore I'd get a bicycle for my birthday (he made good on that, and on Mother's Fifth Avenue hat, too, by the way) and dove back downstairs.

We waited around for half an hour and then Mother sent me to bed. "You poor baby," she said, but I had the idea it wasn't me she was sorry for.

Now I'd like to be able to come up with a climax to all this, but there wasn't one. Not for years and years. Dad looked, the next morning, as if he had been up all night again—which he had—and as if he were about to close his fingers on the Holy Grail. All that day he would reappear irregularly, pace up and down, compare his watch with the living-room clock and the hall clock, and sprint downstairs again. That even went on during by birthday dinner. He had Mother call up the office and say he had Twonk's disease, a falling of the armpits (to whom do I owe this gem? Not my gag) and kept up his peregrinations all that night and all the following day until midnight. He fell into bed, so Mother told me, at one ayem Sunday morning and slept right through until supper-time. He still maintained a dazzling silence about his activities. For the following four months he walked around looking puzzled. For a year after that he looked resigned. Then he took up stuffing newts and moles. The only thing he ever said about the whole crazy business was that he was born to be disappointed, but at least, this time, no one could rib him about it. Now I'm going to tell you about Cordelia.

THIS happened the above-mentioned years and years later. The blow-off was only last week, as a matter of fact. I finished school and went into business with Dad and got mixed up in the war and all that. I didn't get married, though. Not yet. That's what I want to tell you about.

I met her at a party at Ferris's. I was stagging it, but I don't think it would have made any difference if I had brought someone; when I saw Cordelia I was, to understate the matter, impressed.

She came in with some guy I didn't notice at the time and, for all I know, haven't seen since. She slipped out of her light wrap with a single graceful movement; the sleeve caught in her bracelet, and she stood there, full profile, in the doorway, both arms straight and her hands together behind her as she worried the coat free, and I remember the small explosion in my throat as my indrawn breath and my gasp collided. Her hair was dark and lustrous, parted widely in a winging curve away from her brow. There were no pins in it; it shadowed the near side of her face as she bent her head and turned it down and toward the room. The cord of her neck showed columnar and clean. Her lips were parted ever so little, and showed an amused chagrin. Her lashes all but lay on her cheek. They stayed there when she was free and turned to face the room, for she threw her head back and up, flinging her hair behind her. She came across to my side of the party and sat down while the Thing who was with her went anonymously away to get her a drink and came unnoticeably back.

I said to myself, "Henry, my boy, stop staring at the lady. You'll embarrass her."

She turned to me just then and gave me a small smile. Her eyes were widely spaced, and the green of deep water. "I don't mind, really," she said, and I realized I had spoken aloud. I took refuge in a grin, which she answered, and then her left eyelid dropped briefly, and she looked away. It was a wink, but such a slight, tasteful one! If she had used both eyelids, it wouldn't have been a wink at all; she would have looked quickly down and up again. It was an understanding, we're-together little wink, a tactful, gracious, wonderful, marvellous, do you begin to see how I felt?

The party progressed. I once heard somebody decline an invitation to one of Ferris's parties on the grounds that he had *been* to one of Ferris's parties. I tend to be a little more liberal than that, but tonight I could see the point. It was because of Cordelia. She sat still, her chin on the back of her hand, her fingers curled against her white throat, her eyes shifting lazily from one point in the room to another. She did not belong in this conglomeration of bubleheads. Look at her—part Sphinx, part Pallas Athenae . . .

Ferris was doing his Kasbah act, with the bath-towel over his head. He will next imitate Clyde McCoy's trumpet, I thought. He will then inevitably put that lampshade on his head, curl back his upper lip, and be a rickshaw coolie. Following which he will do the adagio dance in which he will be too rough with some girl who will be too polite to protest at his big shiny wet climaxing kiss.

I looked at Cordelia and I looked at Ferris and I thought, no, Henry; that won't do. I drew a deep breath, leaned over to the girl, and said, "If there were a fire in here, do you know the quickest way out?"

She shook her head expectantly.

"I'll show you," I said, and got up. She hesitated a charming moment, rose from her chair as with helium, murmured something polite to her companion, and came to me.

THERE were French doors opening on to the wide terrace porch which also served the front door. We went through them. The air was fragrant and cool, and there was a moon. She said nothing about escaping from fires. The French doors shut out most of the party noises—enough so that we could hear night sounds. We looked at the sky. I did not touch her.

After a bit she said in a voice of husky silver,

"Is the moon tired? she looks so pale
Within her misty veil:
She scales the sky from east to west,
And takes no rest.

"Before the coming of the night
The moon shows papery white;
Before the dawning of the day
She fades away."

It was simple and it was perfect. I looked at her in wonderment. "Who wrote that?"

"Christina Rosset-ti," she said meticulously, looking at the moon. The light lay on her face like dust, and motes of it were caught in the fine down at the side of her jaw.

"I'm Henry Folwell and I know a place

where we could talk for about three hours if we hurry," I said, utterly amazed at myself; I don't generally operate like this.

She looked at the moon and me, the slight deep smile playing subtely with her lips. 'I'm Cordelia Thorne, and I couldn't think of it," she said. "Do you think you could get my wrap without anyone seeing? It's a—"

"I know what it's," I said, sprinting. I went in through the front door, located her coat, bunched it up small, skinned back outside, shookt it out and brought it to her. "You're still here," I said incredulously.

"Did you think I'd go back inside?"

"I thought the wind, or the gods, or my alarm clock would take you away."

"You said that beautifully," she breathed, as I put the coat around her shoulders. I thought I had too. I notched her high up in my estimation as a very discerning girl.

We went to a place called the Stroll Inn where a booth encased us away from all of the world and most of its lights. It was wonderful. I think I did most of the talking. I don't remember all that passed between us but I remember these things, and remember them well.

I was talking about Ferris and the gang he had over there every Saturday night; I checked myself, shrugged, and said, "Oh well. *Chacun à sa goüte,* as they say, which means—"

And she stopped me. "Please. Don't translate. It couldn't be phrased as well in English."

I had been about to say "—which means Jack's son has the gout." I felt sobered and admiring, and just sat and glowed at her.

And then there was that business with the cigarette. She stared at it as it lay in the ash-tray, followed it with her gaze to my lips and back as I talked, until I asked her about it.

She said in a soft, shivery voice, "I feel just like that cigarette."

I, of course, asked her why.

"You pick it up," she whispered, watching it. "You enjoy some of it. You put it down and let it—smolder. You like it, but you hardly notice it . . . "

I thereupon made some incredibly advanced protestations.

And there was the business about her silence—a long, faintly amused, inward-turning silence. I asked her what she was thinking about.

"I was ruminating," she said, in a self-depreciating, tragic voice, "on the futility of human endeavor," and she smiled. And when I asked her what she meant, she laughed aloud and said, "don't you know?" And I said "Oh. That," and worshipped her. She was deep. I'd have dropped dead before I'd have admitted I didn't know what specifically she was driving at.

And books. Music, too. When we were at the stage where I had both her hands and for minutes on end our foreheads were so close together you couldn't have slipped a swizzle-stick between them, I murmured, "We seem to think so much alike . . . Tell me, Cordelia, have you read Cabell?"

She said, "Well, really," in such a tone that, so help me, I apologized. "Lovely stuff," I said, recovering.

She looked reminiscently over my shoulder, smiling her small smile. "So lovely."

"I knew you'd read him," I said, struck with sweet thunder. "And Faulkner—have you read any of Faulkner?"

She gave me a pitying smile. I gulped and said, "Ugly, isn't it?"

She looked reminiscently over my other shoulder, a tiny frown flickering in her flawless brow. "So ugly," she said.

In between times she listened importantly to my opinions on Faulkner and Cabell. And Moussorgsky and Al Jolson. She was wonderful, and we agreed in everything.

AND, hours later, when I stood with her at her door, I couldn't do a thing but shuffle my feet and haul on the hem of my jacket. She gave me her hand gravely, and I think she stopped breathing. I said, "Uh, well," and couldn't improve on it. She swept her gaze from my eyes to my mouth, from side to side across my forehead; it was a tortured "No!" her slightly turning head articulated, and her whole body moved minutely with it. She let go my hand, turned slowly toward the door, and then, with a cry which might have been a breath of laughter and which might have been a sob, she pirouetted back to me and kissed me—not on the mouth, but in the hollow

at the side of my neck. My fuse blew with a snap and a bright light and, as it were, incapacitated my self-starter. She moved deftly then, and to my blurred vision, apparently changed herself into a closed door. I must have stood looking at that door for twenty minutes before I turned and walked dazedly home.

I saw her five more times. Once it was a theater party, and we all went to her house afterward, and she showed great impartiality. Once it was a movie, and who should we run into afterward but her folks. Very nice people. I liked them and I think they liked me. Once it was the circus; we stayed very late, dancing at a pavilion, and yet the street was still crowed outside her home when we arrived there, and a handshake had to do. The fourth time was at a party to which I went alone because she had a date that night. It devolved that the date was the same party. The way she came in did things to me. It wasn't the fact that she was with somebody else; I had no claim on her, and the way she acted with me made me feel pretty confident. It was the way she came in, slipping out of her wrap, which—caught on her—bracelet, freezing her in profile while framed in the doorway . . . I don't want to think about it. Not now.

I did think about it; I left almost immediately so that I could. I went home and slumped down in an easy-chair and convinced myself about coincidences, and was almost back to normal when Dad came into the room.

"Argh!" he said.

I leapt out of the chair and helped him to pick himself up off the middle of the rug. "Blast it, boy," he growled, "Why don't you turn on a light? What are you doing home? I thought you were out with your goddess. Why can't you pick up your big bony feet, or at least leave them somewhere else besides in the doorway of a dark room?" He dusted off his knees. He wasn't hurt. It's a deep-piled rug with two cushions under it. "You're a howling menace. Kicking your father." Dad had mellowed considerably with the years. "What's the matter with you anyhow? She do you something? Or are you beginning to have doubts?" He wore glasses now, but he saw plenty. He'd ribbed me about Cordelia as can only a man who can't stand ribbing himself.

"It was a lousy party," I said.

He turned on a light, "What's up, Henry?"

"Nothing," I said. "Absolutely nothing. I haven't had a fight with her, if that's what you're digging for."

"All right, then," he said, picking up the paper.

"There's nothing wrong with her. She's one of the most wonderful people I know, that's all."

"Sure she is." He began to read the paper.

"She's deep, too. A real wise head, she is. You wouldn't expect to find that in somebody as young as that. Or as good-looking." I wished he would put his eyebrows down.

"She's read everything worth reading," I added as he turned a page a minute later.

Marvellous," he said flatly.

I glared at him. "What do you mean by that?" I barked. "What's marvellous?"

He put the paper down on his knee and smoothed it. His voice was gentle. "Why Cordelia, of course. I'm not arguing with you, Henry."

"Yes you—well, anyway, you're not saying what you think."

"You don't want to hear what I think."

"I know what I want!" I flared.

HE CRACKLED the paper nervously. "My," he said as if to himself, "this is worse than I thought." Before I could interrupt, he said, "Half of humanity doesn't know what it wants or how to find out. The other half knows what it wants, hasn't got it, and is going crazy trying to convince itself that it already has it."

"Very sound," I said acidly. "Where do you peg me?"

He ignored this. "The radio commercial which annoys me most," he said with apparent irrelevancy, "is the one which begins 'There are some things so good they don't have to be improved.' That annoys me because there isn't a thing on God's green earth which couldn't stand improve

ment. By the same token, if you find something which looks to you as if it's unimprovable, then either it's a mirage or you're out of your mind."

"What has that to do with Cordelia?"

"Don't snap at me, son," Dad said quietly. "Let's operate by the rule of reason here. Or must I tear your silly head off and stuff it down your throat?"

I grinned in spite of myself. "Reason prevails, Dad. Go on."

"Now, I've seen the girl, and you're right; she's striking to look at. Extraordinary. In the process of raving about that you've also told me practically every scrap of conversation you've ever had with her."

"I have?"

"You're like your mother; you talk too much," he smiled. "Don't get flustered. It was good to listen to. Shows you're healthy. But I kept noticing one thing in these mouthings—all she's read, all the languages she understands, all the music she likes—and that is that you have never quoted her yet as saying a single declarative sentence. You have never quoted her as opening a conversation, changing the subject, mentioning something you both liked *before* you mentioned it, or having a single idea that you didn't like." He shrugged. "Maybe she is a good listener. They're—"

"Now wait a minute—"

"—They're rare anywhere in the world, especially in this house," he went on smoothly. "Put your hands back in your pockets, Henry, or sit on 'em until I've finished. Now, I'm not making any charges about Cordelia. There aren't any. She's wonderful. That's the trouble. For Pete's sake get her to make a flat statement."

"She has, plenty of times," I said hotly. "You just don't know her! Why, she's the most—"

He put up his hands and turned his head as if I were aiming a bucket of water at him. "Shut up!" he roared. I shut. "Now," he said, "listen to me. If you're right, you're right and there's no use defending anything. If you're wrong you'd better find it out soon before you get hurt. But I don't want to sit here and watch the process. I know how you tick, Henry. By gosh, I ought to. You're like I was. You and I, we get a hot idea and go all out for it, all speed and no control. We spill off at the mouth until we have the whole world watching, and when the idea turns sour the whole world gets in its licks, standing around laughing. Keep your beautiful dreams to yourself. If they don't pan out you can always kick yourself effectively enough, without having every wall-eyed neighbor helping you."

A picture of Mr. Bohackus with the protruding china-blue eyes, our neighbor of along ago, crossed my mind, and I chuckled.

"That's better, Henry," said Dad. "Listen. When a fellow gets to be a big grown-up man, which is likely to happen at any age, or never, he learns to make a pile of his beloved failures and consign them to the flames, and never think of them again. But it ought to be a private bonfire."

It sounded like sense, particularly the part about not having to defend something if it was right enough to be its own defense. I said, "Thanks, Dad. I'll have to think. I don't know if I agree with you . . . I'll tell you something, though. If Cordelia turned out to be nothing but a phonograph, I'd consider it a pleasure to spend the rest of my life buying new records for her."

"That'd be fine," said Dad, "if it was what you wanted. I seriously doubt that it is just now."

"Of course it isn't. Cordelia's all woman and has a wonderful mind, and that's what I want."

"Bless you, my children," Dad said, and grinned.

I Knew I was right, and that Dad was simply expressing a misguided caution. The Foxy Grandpa routine, I thought, was a sign of advancing age. Dad sure was changed since the old days. On the other hand, he hadn't been the same since the mysterious frittering-out of his mysterious down-cellar project. I stopped thinking about Dad, and turned my mind to my own troubles.

I had plenty of time to think; I couldn't get a Saturday date with her for two weeks, and I wanted this session to run until it was finished with no early curfews. Not, as I have said, that I had any doubts. Far from it. All the same, I made a little list . . .

I don't think I said ten words to her until we were three blocks from her house. She quite took my breath away. She was wearing a green suit with surprising lapels that featured her fabulous profile and made me ache inside. I had not known that I was so hungry for a sight of her, and now she was more than a sight, now her warm hand had slipped into mine as we walked. "Cordelia . . ." I whispered.

She turned her face to me, and showed me the tender tuggings in the corners of her mouth. She made an interrogative sound, like a sleepy bird.

"Cordelia," I said thickly. It all came out in a monotone. "I didn't know I could miss anybody so much. There's been a hollow place in my eyes, wherever I looked; it had no color and it was shaped like you. Now you fill it and I can see again."

She dropped her eyes, and her smile was a thing to see. "You said that beautifully," she breathed.

I hadn't thought of that. What I had said was squeezed out of me like toothpaste out of a tube, with the same uniformity between what came out and what was still inside.

"We'll go to the Stroll Inn," I said. It was where we met. We didn't meet at the party. We just saw each other there. We met in that booth.

She nodded gravely and walked with me, her face asleep, its attention turned inward, deeply engaged. It was not until we turned the corner on Winter Street and faced the Inn that I thought of my list; and when I did, I felt a double, sickening impact—first, one of shame that I should dare to examine and experiment with someone like this, second, because item 5 on that list was "You said that beautifully . . ."

The Stroll Inn, as I indicated before, has all its lights, practically, on the outside. Cordelia looked at me thoughtfully as we walked into their wormin neon field. "Are you all right?" she asked. "You look pale."

"How can you tell?" I asked, indicating the lights, which flickered and switched, orange and green and blue and red. She smiled appreciatively, and two voices spoke within me. One said joyfully, " 'You look pale' is a declarative statement." the other said angrily, "You're hedging. And by the way, what do you suppose that subtle smile is covering up, if anything?" Both voices spoke forcefully, combining in a jumble which left me badly confused. We went in and found a booth and ordered dinner. Cordelia said with pleasure that she would have what I ordered.

Over the appetizer I said, disliking myself intensely. "Isn't this wonderful? All we need is a moon. Can't you see it, hanging up there over us?"

She laughed and looked up, and sad sensitivity came into her face. I closed my eyes, waiting.

" 'Is the moon tired? she looks so pale —' " she began.

I started to chew again. I think it was marinated herring, and very good too, but at the moment it tasted like cold oatmeal with a dash of warm lard. I called the waiter and ordered a double rum and soda. As he turned away I called him back and asked him to bring a bottle instead. I needed help from somewhere, and pouring it out of a bottle seemed a fine idea at the time.

Over the soup I asked her what she was thinking about. "I was ruminating," she said in a self-depreciating, tragic voice," on the futility of human endeavor." Oh, brother, me too, I thought. Me too.

Over the dessert we had converse again, the meat course having passed silently. We probably presented a lovly picture, the two of us wordlessly drinking in each other's presence, the girl radiating an understanding tenderness, the young man speechless with admiration. Look how he watches her, how his eyes travel over her face, how he sighs and shakes his head and looks back at his plate.

I looked across the Inn. In a plate-glass window a flashing neon sign said bluely, "nnI llortS. nnI llortS."

"Nni llorts," I murmured.

Cordelia looked up at me expectantly, with her questioning sound. I tensed. I filled the jigger with rum and poured two fingers into my empty highball glass. I took the jigger in one hand and the glass in the other.

I said, "You've read Kremlin von Schtunk, the Hungarian poet?" and drank the jigger.

"Well, really," she said pityingly.

"I was just thinking of his superb line 'Nni llorts, nov shmoz ka smörgasbord,'" I intoned, "which means—" and I drank the glass.

She reached across the table and touched my elbow. "Please. Don't translate. It couldn't be phrased as well in English."

Something within me curled up and died. Small, tight, cold and dense, its corpse settled under my breastbone. I could have raged at her, I supposed. I could have coldly questioned her, pinned her down, stripped from her those layers of schooled conversational reactions, leaving her ignorance in nakedness. But what for? I didn't want it. . . . And I could have talked to her about honesty and ethics and human aims—why did she do it? What did she ever hope to get? Did she think she would ever corral a man and expect him to be blind, for the rest of his life, to the fact that there was nothing behind this false front—nothing at all? Did she think that—did she think? No.

I looked at her, the way she was smiling at me, the deep shifting currents which seemed to be in her eyes. She was a monster. She was some graceful diction backed by a bare half-dozen relays. She was a card-file. She was a bubble, thin-skinned, covered with swirling, puzzling, compelling colors, filled with nothing. I was hurt and angry and, I think, a little frightened. I drank some more rum. I ordered her a drink and then another, and stayed ahead of her four to one. I'd have walked out and gone home if I had been able to summon the strength. I couldn't. I could only sit and stare at her and bathe myself in agonized astonishment. She didn't mind. She sat listening as raptly to my silence as she had to my conversation. Once she said, "we're just *being* together, aren't we?" and I recognized it as another trick from the bag. I wondered idly how many she might come up with if I just waited.

She came up with plenty.

She sat up and leaned forward abruptly. I had the distinct feeling that she was staring at me—her face was positioned right for it—but her eyes were closed. I put my glass down and stared blearily back, thinking, now what?

Her lips parted, twitched, opened wide, pursed. They uttered a glottal gurgling which was most unpleasant. I pushed my chair back, startled. "Are you sick?"

"Are you terrestrial?" she asked me.

"Am I *what?*"

"Making—contact thirty years," she said. Her voice was halting, filled with effort.

"What are you talking about?"

"Terrestrial quickly power going," she said clearly. "Many—uh—much power making contact this way very high frequencies thought. Easy radio. Not again thought. Take radio code quickly."

"Listen, toots," I said nastily, "This old nose no longer has a ring in it. Go play tricks on somebody else." I drank some more rum. An I. Q. of sixty, and crazy besides. "You're a real find, you are," I said.

"Graphic," she said. "Uh—write. Write. Write." She began to claw the table cloth. I looked at her hand. It was making scribbling motions. "Write write."

I flipped a menu over and put it in front of her and gave her my pen.

NOW, I read an article once on automatic writing—you know, that spiritualist stuff. Before witnesses, a woman once wrote a long letter in trance in an unfamiliar (to her) hand, at the astonishing rate of four hundred and eight words a minute. Cordelia seemed to be out to break that record. That pen-nib was a blur. She was still leaning forward rigidly, and her eyes were still closed. But instead of a blurred scrawl, what took shape under her flying hand was a neat list or chart. There was an alphabet of sorts, although not arranged in the usual way; it was more a list of sounds. And there were the numbers one to fourteen. Beside each sound and each number was a cluster of regular dots which looked rather like Braille. The whole sheet took her not over forty-five seconds to do. And after she finished she didn't move anything except her eyelids, which went up. "I think," she said conversationally, "that I'd better get home, Henry. I feel a little dizzy."

I felt a little more than that. The rum, in rum's inevitable way, had sneaked up on me, and suddenly the room began to spin, diagonally, from the lower left to the upper right. I closed my eyes tight, opened them,

fixed my gaze on a beer-tap on the bar at the end of the room, and held it still until the room slowed and stopped. "You're so right," I said, and did a press-up on the table top to assist my legs. I managed to help Cordelia on with her light coat. I put my pen back in my pocket (I found it the next morning with the cap still off and a fine color scheme in the lining of my jacket) and picked up the menu.

"What's that?" asked Cordelia.

"A souvenir," I said glumly. I had no picture, no school ring, no nothing. Only a doodle. I was too tired, twisted, and tanked to wonder much about it, or about the fact that she seemed never to have seen it before. I folded it in two and put it in my hip.

I got her home without leaning on her. I don't know if she was ready to give a repeat performance of that goodnight routine. I didn't wait to find out. I took her to the door and patted her on the cheek and went away from there. It wasn't her fault...

When I got to our house, I dropped my hat on the floor in the hall and went into the dark living-room and fell into the easy-chair by the door. It was a comfortable chair. It was a comfortable room. I felt about as bad as I ever had. I remember wondering smokily whether anyone ever loves a person. People seem to love dreams instead, and for the lucky ones, the person is close to the dream. But it's a dream all the same, a sticky dream. You unload the person, and the dream stays with you.

What was it Dad had said? "When a fellow gets to be a big grown-up man . . . he learns to make a pile of his beloved failures and consign them to the flames." "Hah!" I ejaculated, and gagged. The rum tasted terrible. I had nothing to burn but memories and the lining of my stomach. The latter was flaming merrily. The former stayed where they were. The way she smiled, so deep and secret . . .

Then I remembered the doodle. Her hands had touched it, her mind had—No, her mind hadn't. It could have been anyone's mind, but not hers. The girl operated under a great handicap. No brains. I felt terrible. I got up out of the chair and wove across the room, leaning on the mantel. I put my forehead on the arm which I had put on the mantel, and with my other hand worried the menu out of my pocket. With the one hand and my teeth I tore it into small pieces and dropped the pieces in the grate, all but one. Then I heaved myself upright, braced my shoulder against the mantel, which had suddenly begun to bob and weave, got hold of my lighter, coaxed a flame out of it and lit the piece I'd saved. It burned fine. I let it slip into the grate. It flickered, dimmed, caught on another piece of paper, flared up again. I went down on one knee and carefully fed all the little pieces to the flame. When it finally went out I stirred the ashes around with my finger, got up, wiped my hands on my pants, said, "That was good advice Dad gave me," and went back to the chair. I went back into it, pushed my shoes off my feet, curled my legs under me and, feeling much better, dozed off.

I woke slowly, some time later, with granulated eyelids and a mouth full of emory and quinine. My head was awake but my legs were asleep and my stomach had its little hands on my backbone and was trying to pull it out by the roots. I sat there groggily looking at the fire.

Fire? What fire? I blinked and winced; I could almost hear my eyelids rasping.

THERE was a fire in the grate. Dad was kneeling beside it, feeding it small pieces of paper. I didn't say anything; I don't think it occurred to me. I just watched.

He let the fire go out after a while; then he stirred the ashes with his finger and stood up with a sigh, wiping his hands on his pants. "Good advice I gave the boy. Time I took it myself." He loomed across the shadowy room to me, turned around and sat down in my lap. He was relaxed and heavy, but he didn't stay there long enough for me to feel it. "Gah!" he said, crossed the room again in one huge bound, put his back against the mantel and said, "Don't move, you. I've got a gun."

"It's me, Dad."

"Henry! Bythelordharry, you'll be the death of me yet. That was the most inconsiderate thing you have have ever done in your entire selfish life. I've a notion to bend this poker over your adam's apple, you snipe." He stamped over to the book case and turned on the light. "This is the last

time I'll ever—Henry! What's the matter? You look awful! Are you all right?"

"I'll live," I said regretfully. "What were you burning?"

He grinned sheepishly. "A beloved failure. Remember my preachment a couple weeks ago? It got to working on me. I decided to take my own advice." He breathed deeply. "I feel much better, I think."

"I burned some stuff too," I croaked. "I feel better too. I think," I added.

"Cordelia?" he asked, sitting near me.

"She hasn't got brain one," I said.

"Well," he said. There was more sharing and comfort in the single syllable than in anything I have ever heard. I looked at him. He hadn't changed much over the years. A bit heavier. A bit grayer. Still intensely alive, though. And he'd learned to control those wild projects of his. I thought, quite objectively, "I like this man."

We were quiet for a warm while. Then, "Dad—what was it you burned? The Martian project?"

"Why, you young devil! How did you know?"

"I dunno. You look like I feel. Sort of —well, you've finally unloaded something, and it hurts to lose it, but you're glad you did."

"On the nose," he said, and grinned sheepishly. "Yup, Henry—I really hugged that project to me. Want to hear about it?"

ANYTHING but Cordelia, I though. "I saw your rig," I said, to break the ice. "The night you sent me out for the wire. You left the workshop open."

"I'll be darned. I thought I'd gotten away with it."

"Mother knew what you were up to, though she didn't know how."

"And you saw how."

"I saw that weird gimmick of yours, but it didn't mean anything to me. Mother told me never to mention it to you. She thought you'd be happier if you were left alone."

He laughed with real delight. "Bless her heart," he said. "She was a most understanding woman."

"I read about the Martian signals in the papers," I said. "Fellow named—what was it?"

"Jenkins," said Dad. "C. Francis Jenkins. He built a film-tape recorder to catch the signals. He tuned to six thousand meters and had a flashing light to record the signals. Primitive, but it worked Dr. David Todd of Amherst was the man who organized the whole project, and got the big radio people all over the world to cooperate. They had a five-minute silence every hour during Mars' closest proximity—August 21 to 23."

"I remember," I said. "It was my birthday. 1924. What got you so teed-off?"

"I got mad," said my father, folding his hands over his stomach. "Just because it had become fashionable to use radio in a certain way on earth, those simple souls had to assume that the Martian signals—if any —would come through the same way. I felt that they'd be different."

"Why should they be?"

"Why should we expect Martians to be the same? Or even think the same? I just took a wild stab at it, that's all. I tuned in on six wavelengths at the same time. I set up my rig so that anything coming through on any one wavelength would actuate a particular phone."

"I remember," I said, trying hard. "The iron filings on the paper tape, over the earphones."

"That's right. The phone was positioned far enough below the tape so that the magnetic field would barely contain the filings. When the diaphragm vibrated, the filings tended to cluster. I had six phones on six different wavelengths, arranged like this," and he counted them out on the palm of his hand:

1	2
3	4
5	6

"What could you get? I don't figure it, Dad. There'd be no way of separating your dots and dashes."

"Blast!" he exploded. "That's the kind of thinking that made me mad, and makes me mad to this day! No; what I was after was something completely different in transmission. Look; how much would you get out of piano music if all the strings but one were broken? Only when the pianist hit that note in the course of his transmission would you hear anything. See what I mean? Supposing the Martians were sending

in notes and chords of an established octave of frequencies? Sure—Jenkins got signals. No one's ever been able to interperet them. Well, supposing I was right—then Jenkins was recording only one of several or many 'notes' of the scale, and of course it was meaningless."

"Well, what did you get?"

"Forty-six photographs, five of which were so badly under-exposed that they were useless to me. I finally got the knack of moving the tape carefully enough and lighting it properly, and they came out pretty well. I got signals on four of the six frequencies. I got the same grouping only three or four times; I mean, sometimes there would be something on phones 1, 2, and 4, and sometimes it would only be on 4, and sometimes it would be on 2 and 6. Three and 5 never did come through; it was just fantastic luck that I picked the right frequencies, I suppose, for the other four."

"What frequencies did you use?"

He grinned. "I don't know. I really don't. It was all by guess and by Golly. I never was an engineer, Henry. I'm in the insurance business. I had no instruments—particularly not in 1924. I wound a 6000-meter coil according to specs they printed in the paper. As for the others, I worked on the knowledge that less turns of heavier wire means shorter wave-lengths. I haven't got the coils now and couldn't duplicate 'em in a million years. All I can say for sure is that they were all different, and stepped down from 6000.

"Anyway, I studied those things until I was blue in the face. It must've been the better part of a year before I called in anyone else. I wrote to Mr. Jenkins and Dr. Todd too, but who am I? A taxidermical broker with a wacky idea. They sent the pictures back with polite letters, and I can't say I blame them . . . anyway, good riddance to the things. But it was a wonderful idea, and I wanted so much to be the man who did the job. . . . Ever want something so badly you couldn't see straight, Henry?"

"Me?" I asked, with bitterness.

"It's all over now, though. I'm through with crazy projects, for life. Never again. But gosh, I did love that project. Know what I mean?"

"No," I said with even more bitterness.

He sat up straight. "Hey. I'm sorry, fellow. Those were rhetorical questions. Maybe you'd better spill it."

So I told it to him—all of it. Once I started, I couldn't stop. I told him about the moon poem and the "well, really" gimmick and the "please don't translate" routine, and the more I talked the worse I felt. He sat and listened, and didn't say "I told you so," and the idea was worming its way into the back of my mind as I talked that here sat one of the most understanding people ever created, when he screamed. He screamed as one screams at the intrusion of an ice-cube into the back of one's bathing-suit.

"What's the matter?" I asked, breaking off.

"Go on, go on," he gabbled. "Henry you idiot don't tell me you don't know what you're saying for Pete's sake boy tell it to—"

"Whoa! I don't even remember where I was."

"What she said to you—'Are you a terrestrial?' "

"Oh, don't get so excited, Dad. It doesn't mean anything. Why bother? She was trying to interest me, I suppose. I didn't let it get to me then and I won't now. She—"

"*Blast* her! I'm not talking about her. It was what she said. Go on, Henry! You say she wrote something?"

He wormed it all out of me. He forced me to go over it and over it. The windows paled and the single light by the book case looked yellow and ill in the dawn, but still he pounded at me. And I finally quit. I just quit, out of compounded exhaustion and stubbornness. I lay back in the big chair and glared at him.

He strode up and down the room, trying to beat his left hand to a pulp with a right fist. "Of course, of course," he said excitedly. "That's how they'd do it. The blankest mind in the world. Blank and sensitive, like undeveloped film. *Of course!* 'Making contact thirty years' they said. 'Much power making contact this way—very high frequencies thought.' A radionic means of transmitting thought, and it uses too much power to be practical. 'Easy radio. Not again thought.' "

He stopped in front of me, glaring. " 'Not again thought' he growled. "You—you

dope! How could my flesh and blood be so abjectly stupid? There in your hands you held the interplanetary Rosetta Stone, and what did you do with it?"

I glared back at him. "I was quote consigning one of my beloved failures to the flames and quote," I said nastily.

Suddenly he was slumped and tired. "So you were, son. So you were. And it was all there—like Braille, you said. A series of phonetic symbols, and almost certainly a list of the frequency-octave they use. And—and all my pictures. . . . I burned them too." He sat down.

"Henry—"

"Don't take it so hard, Dad," I said. "Your advice was good. You forget your Martians and I'll forget my moron. When a fellow gets to be a grown-up man—"

He didn't hear me. "Henry. You say her folks like you?"

I sprang to my feet. "NO!" I bellowed. "Dad, I will not, repeat, *not* under any circumstances woo that beautiful package of brainless reflexes. I have had mine. I—"

"You really mean it, don't you?"

"That I do," I said positively.

"Well," he said dejectedly, "I guess that's that."

And then that old, old fever came back into his face.

"Dad—"

He slowly straightened up, that hot "Land ho!" expression in his eyes. My father is hale, handsome, and, when he wants to be, extremely persistent.

"Now, Dad," I said. "Let's be reasonable. She's very young, Dad. Now, let's talk this thing over a little more, Dad. You can't go following a girl all over the house with a notebook and pencil. They said they wouldn't use the thought contact again, Dad. Now Dad—"

"Your mother would understand if she were alive," he murmured.

"No! You can't!" I bawled. "Dad, for heaven's sake use your head! Why you—Cordelia—Dad, she'd make me call her *Mummy!*"

Now what am I going to do?

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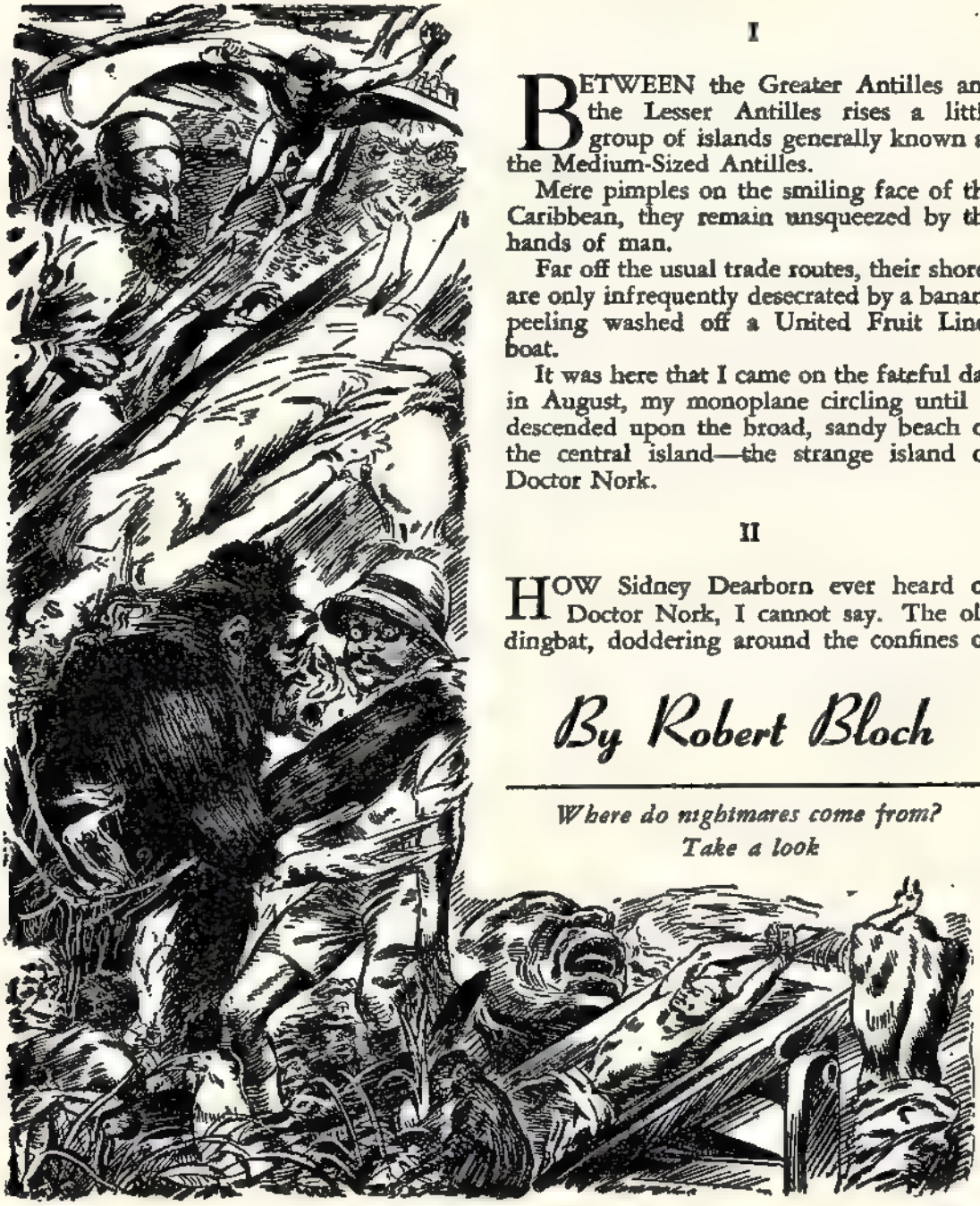
The Strange Island of Doctor Nork



I

BETWEEN the Greater Antilles and the Lesser Antilles rises a little group of islands generally known as the Medium-Sized Antilles.

Mere pimples on the smiling face of the Caribbean, they remain unsqueezed by the hands of man.

Far off the usual trade routes, their shores are only infrequently desecrated by a banana peeling washed off a United Fruit Lines boat.

It was here that I came on the fateful day in August, my monoplane circling until it descended upon the broad, sandy beach of the central island—the strange island of Doctor Nork.

II

HOW Sidney Dearborn ever heard of Doctor Nork, I cannot say. The old dingbat, doddering around the confines of

By Robert Bloch

Where do nightmares come from? Take a look

Heading by Vincent Napoli

his palatial estate, seldom pays much attention to his news magazine, let alone interesting himself in the doings of a mere individual.

But probably even a man like Dearborn, who is devoting most of his time to becoming an octogenarian—has been for the past eighty years—occasionally pauses and reads the papers.

Quite possibly, Dearborn read an article about Doctor Nork in one of his own magazines. I can see him calling my editor in New York.

"Hello—this is Dearborn. Get me an exclusive feature interview on Nork.

"Nork. Nork! No, I'm not sick. Fella's name. N-o-r-k. Big scientist. Lives all alone on an island someplace, doing experiments.

"How do I know what kind of experiments? Find out for me. Tell our readers. That's what I'm paying you fifty grand a year for—to find out facts.

"This story on Nork is drivel. Pure drivel. No facts. It says he's endowed by a lot of foundations. Endowed for what? Can he split an atom? Get me all the dope.

"Know what I think? I smell Communism, that's what I smell. What would a big scientist want to hide out on an island for if he wasn't afraid? The American people deserve to know.

"Well, send a man down to see him. Interview him. I want a complete writeup on Nork within ten days. And say—hello, hello—I want you to be sure and find out where he stands on the oleomargarine tax!"

That's the way the conversation probably went. I can only guess. All I know is that the managing editor called me into the front office and gave me the assignment.

"Charter a plane," he said. "Get there, get the yarn, and get back. Get it?"

I got it, but good.

III

THE smooth yellow beach on which my monoplane had landed evidently girdled the island, which was approximately a mile in diameter. Inland, palmettos clustered thickly in a dense jungle that ended abruptly at the foot of a gigantic cliff occupying the island's center. Monkeys, macaws, toucans and parakeets set up a Disney-like clatter as I toted my suitcase and portable typewriter across the sands, but there was no evidence of human life—not even a Burma-Shave sign.

For a moment I wondered if I had made a mistake. I felt like Robinson Crusoe, and remembered the stirring episode where he discovers in the sand the imprint of a naked human foot.

Then I gasped. I *was* Robinson Crusoe. For there, before me in the golden sand, was the symbol of life itself! Not the raw imprint of savage life, but the very essence of civilization.

It was an old Pepsi-Cola bottle.

I stooped down to pick it up and then noted, with a sudden shock, that the bottle was not empty.

A SOGGY, crumpled sheet of paper had been stuffed down the neck, which was sealed with a battered cap. I pried it loose, then fished out the parchment and unfolded the sheet. The message was written in a childish scrawl.

To Whom It May Concern:

Doctor Nork is a mean, nasty old thing, so there!

(Signed) A True Friend

So I *was* on the right island, after all.

My elation subsided as I realized "A True Friend's" warning about my future host. Well, it was no concern of mine. For all I knew, "A True Friend" might be a far meaner and nastier old thing than Doctor Nork.

At any rate, I wasn't here to sit in judgment; I was here to get a story on the mysterious medico.

Resealing the message in the bottle, I tossed it into the water. Apparently that had been "A True Friend's" intention, but his aim was bad.

I toted my luggage towards the palmetto forest as the macaws formed a screaming rainbow round my head.

Oh, those living flames of beauty! Oh, those lovely, lambent— "Oh, for crying out loud!"

I muttered.

Apparently it was safer to walk under the shelter of the trees.

IV

I WAS still wiping my pith helmet when I felt a hand tap my shoulder. I wheeled, then recoiled in horror. It hadn't been a hand on my shoulder, after all. I beheld a paw.

Crouching, confronting me, was the shaggy, shambling figure of a gigantic great ape. Gorilla-eyes glared, and a tusked maw gaped wide in slavering dread. A growl rumbled up into the threatening throat.

"You want handkerchief?" said the ape.

The intonation was bestial, but the words were human, intelligible. I stared, gulped, and shook my head in amazement.

"Who you fella?" the ape demanded. "You fella come safari?"

I shook my head again, but the hallucination didn't disappear.

"You come in jungle, hunt for diamonds, gold, no? You seek Elephant's Graveyard, maybe, heap much ivory?"

I could only goggle.

"You *bwana* search for White Goddess?"

I shrugged my heart back out of my mouth and down to where it belonged. Then I found my voice again. "You—you can actually talk!" I gasped. "I—I never thought I'd live to hear a gorilla talk like that."

The ape grimaced dreadfully.

"Sounds pretty corny, eh, Jack? I think so, too—all that pidgin English and fake native lingo. Strictly from hunger. But you know how it is with the Doc—he makes me talk that way, says it's what they want to hear.

Sometimes I get pretty ashamed when I think that an anthropoid of my education has to go around making like a *schmoe,* but I got my orders. Like I say, you know the Doc."

"But I don't know the Doc," I answered. "That's just what I came down here for; I want to meet him."

"You from the publishers?" asked the gorilla.

"News magazine," I replied. "I'm here for an interview."

"Might have known it," the ape muttered. "You don't have a mustache. Thought you were a villain at first; but the villains all have mustaches, don't they?"

I was getting confused again.

The anthropoid ignored my bewilderment and courteously relieved me of my luggage. "Come on," he growled. "Follow me."

He led a path through the palmettos. "Reporter, eh?" he mused. "What do you do evenings?"

"How do you mean?"

"Fly, hurtle, sail, batter, flame, or blast?"

"I don't understand," I confessed. "You must have me mixed up with somebody else. Evenings, I go home. Sometimes I look up a friend and play a little Gin Rummy."

"Tell you what you do," the gorilla suggested. "When you get done with the Doc, look me up and I'll take you on for a few hands."

V

THE cliff-top was a broad, flat plateau overlooking the beach and sea below. The wind blew cold and clear across the treeless expanse, and borne upon its eddies the seagulls wheeled and circled.

Remembering the macaws, I made an instinctive grab for my solar topee and jammed it down over my forehead. Then I peered out under its brim at the domicile of Doctor Nork.

Nork's residence sprawled across the plateau like some gigantic concrete wheel. A white-domed central structure acted as the hub, from which extended a half-dozen radii in the shape of wings attached to the main building. The outer circumference was rimmed by a high stone fence, broken by a single gate. The ape led me towards it while I stared up and marveled at the elaborate structure set upon a lonely tropical isle.

Then we were standing before the gate, which apparently served as a front door. I noted a neatly lettered sign reading:

ERASMUS NORK, M.D.
Doctor is in—Please be Seated

I had nothing to sit on but my valise. The gorilla opened the front door and bid me enter. He shambled into a spacious white hallway, its antiseptic decor reminiscent of an old Doctor Kildare movie. I followed him as we walked along the corridor, passing half a dozen closed doors in succession.

Finally we paused before a large double-door at the end of the hall.

"I'll announce you," the ape suggested. "Doctor Nork is conducting an experiment."

He slipped through the half-open doorway and disappeared. I stood in the hall and listened to the drone of a faraway dynamo. It accented the eeriness of this white palace set in the heart of a tropical jungle. Weird scientific experiments and talking apes—

"Come right in, my friend!" The booming voice resounded from the room behind the door. "Welcome to the Island!" I stepped forward into the laboratory of Doctor Nork.

A great arc-light glared from the domed roof, glared down upon a scene of horror. A huge steel operating table occupied the center of the room, and it was in use. Strapped securely to its surface with a half-clad girl, hair streaming, mouth contorted, eyes wide with terror.

Towering above her was a tall, thin, red-bearded man with a beaked nose and slanted eyes. Like a surgeon, he wore a white gown. Like a surgeon, he brandished a glittering knife. Even as I watched, he raised the cruel blade and his arm swooped down to the girl's bare white bosom.

The red-bearded man grinned exultantly. "How's tricks?" he whispered. The knife came down—

"Stop!"

I plunged forward frantically. Hairy arms pinioned me from behind. The ape held me fast.

"Hold it!" snarled the red-bearded man. "There—got it?"

"Swell, Boss!" squeaked an unfamiliar voice from the corner of the room. I twisted my head and saw a little man with a smock standing before an easel. Even as I watched, he did things to the tripod stand, folding it under his arm, and gathering the board up, scuttled from the room.

The tall man dropped the knife and fumbled with the cords binding the girl.

"Curse these knots!" he grumbled. "Ought to use the disintegrator. There you are, Toots."

The girl stood up and fluffed out her hair. She smiled at me—no, past me, over my shoulder where the ape stood.

"How's for a little Gin?" she said.

The gorilla nodded and released me. Linked arm in arm, girl and gorilla ambled from the room. And the tall, red-bearded man gestured towards me with his knife.

"Sit down, my friend," he said. "You must be tired after your trip. Maybe you'd prefer to lie down—how about right here, on the operating table?"

"No thanks," I gulped. "You're Doctor Nork, I presume?"

"Of course. Glad to see you. It isn't often we get a chance to converse with a representative of civilization. You must tell me all that's happening in the world. Has the atomic bomb blown up any continent's lately?"

"I don't know—I left New York yesterday," I answered.

Nork shrugged. "So you came all the way down here just for an interview, eh? I suppose you want to discuss the new slants we worked out?"

"Slants?" I fumbled for his meaning. "I was sent here to find out something about your experiments. I hear you are conducting some mysterious investigations."

"Mysterious investigations? Experiments? My dear sir, you've been badly misled. I'm a business man. This is a business office." Doctor Nork took out a strop and began to sharpen his knife, splitting hairs from his beard to test the keen edge of the blade.

"But I heard—"

"You were mistaken." Nork spoke curtly.

At that moment the door opened and the gorilla entered.

"Hey, Doc, those guys are here for the experiments," he announced.

Nork blushed and avoided my accusing stare.

"Tell them I'm busy," he barked. "Tell them they'll have to wait."

"But the subject is already strapped down. The stenographer is ready. Everything is set up."

"Confound it!" muttered the Doctor. "Oh, very well!"

"You don't have to come down, Doc," the ape said. "Just give me the equipment and I'll take it to them."

Doctor Nork shrugged and stepped over to one of the blank, gleaming white laboratory walls. He pressed a tile and something clicked. A section of the wall slid back and

revealed a long rack. Objects hung from thongs, dangled from hooks.

I stared at the display. There were long black whips, short cats-of-nine-tails, blackjacks, bludgeons, truncheons, clubs, assegais, knobkerries, shillelaghs.

The gorilla lumbered over and selected an armful at random.

"This oughta do the trick, eh, Doc?"

Nork nodded. Another click and the wall slid back into place. He pressed a second tile. A grating wheeze echoed through the room as a portion of the floor moved to disclose a secret stairway descending into black depths below. The ape clambered down the steps, bearing his homicidal burden. With a loud clang, the floor closed behind him.

I reeled, bewildered. Whips, weapons, concealed passages, and a nameless experiment—what did it mean?

Nork feigned nonchalance as he faced me.

"Come on," I said. "Quit stalling. My editor sent me down here for a feature story and I intend to get it. Now I—"

My words were cut short, then drowned out by a ghastly shriek. It came from beneath my very feet; rising in a weird wail, an ululation of utter agony.

"What's that?" I gasped.

"I didn't hear anything," purred Nork.

Again the dreadful scream tore the air to ribbons.

"What's going on here?" I panted. "What does it all mean? What kind of experiment needs whips and bludgeons? What are they doing down there?"

"Oh, all right, I suppose I'll have to tell you," Nork sighed. "But it's really nothing at all. They're just beating the living hell out of a guy."

VI

I MADE a dive for the Doctor's Bearded throat. "You fiend!" I shrieked. "Now I know what you are—a mad scientist!"

"Hey, cut it out!" yelled Nork. "You're tearing my beard!"

Indeed, the red beard came loose in my hands, revealing a smaller black beard beneath it.

"Don't touch the black beard—that's genuine!" warned the scientist. "I just wear the red for sketches. Red seems to be all the thing this season. Wait, let me explain things to you."

"Explain things? While you're torturing that poor devil down there in the cellar?"

"What poor devil He's a volunteer. Also a confirmed masochist; he likes to be beaten up. Besides, I'm paying him five hundred dollars for his trouble."

"You're paying him five hundred dollars—?"

"Didn't I tell you this was business? Come on, I'll let you see for yourself."

The Doctor pressed the wall, the steps below were revealed, and I followed him down into the noisome darkness. As we passed into the nighted depths, the screams and groans rose hideously. The hair on my scalp followed suit.

We groped along a damp stone corridor until we reached a dimly lit room. It was a sight I never expected to see—a sight no man of the twentieth century should see—a medieval dungeon.

Torchlight flared on rack and strappado, on boot and Iron Maiden and wheel. Torchlight flickered down on the table where the groaning man writhed beneath the blows of two gigantic blackamoors.

The ape stood by silently, hand resting on the shoulders of a small man who sat perched on a high stool. Head cocked attentatively as though listening, the little man was frantically scribbling down shorthand jottings.

Thuds, curses, screeches, blows, moans and gasps filled the air—but they faded into a sort of background noise as the little man beamed ecstatically and babbled at each fresh sound.

"WHUUP!" he yelled. "OOFFLE!"

"Huh?" I murmured.

"GUTCH! Boy, didja hear dat one, hey? GUTCH; Tha's a new one, huh, Doc?" He peered over his spectacles and addressed the blackamoors. "Hey, how's fer usin' the brass knucks now? We ain't had no brass knucks lately."

"OK," grunted the biggest of the Negroes. "Dat is, if'n it's OK wid de victim."

"OK, don't mind me," piped the man on the table, grinning up through the black-and-blue blur of his ravaged face. "I can

take it." Surprisingly, he giggled. "Lay on, MacDuff!"

The Negroes began to assail his midriff with brass knuckles. He howled and grunted at every blow.

"SPLATT!" yapped the stenographer on the stool. "Oh, Boy, lissen to him! URRK! BLIPP! WHIZZLE! Hey, you witha lead pipe—rap him onna noggin again, I did'n catch it the firs' time. There! SPOOO-IIINNNGGG!!!"

Doctor Nork tapped me on the shoulder. "Had enough?" he whispered. I nodded.

"Let's go." He led the way back to the stairs, calling over his shoulder, "Don't overdo it, boys, and be careful how you hit him. Last time you broke three whips and a truncheon. Those things cost money, you know."

"BOING!" yelled the stenographer. "BOINGA-BOINGA-BOINGA!"

As we plodded up the steps, Nork sighed. "There's so much to worry about," he confided. "So much to do. It isn't easy, being the mastermind of all the comic books."

VII

WE SAT in another chamber, now—Doctor Nork's spacious and imposing library. A hundred shelves, rising to the dizzying height of the ceiling, encircled us on all sides. Every shelf was packed, crammed, jammed full of paperbound books with lurid covers. Nork reached over to an end-table and selected one at random, riffling the pages as he spoke.

"Of course, you can understand what we're doing down there, now," he said. "Just getting our blurbs, that's all. Filling the old ballons."

"Filling the what?"

"The balloons. You know—the things coming out of the characters' mouths in comic books. When a crook gets hit by the hero, he makes a noise. Or the weapon makes a noise. Sometimes they both make noises."

"Like BANG and OUCH?"

"There—you see?" Doctor Nork beamed. "We can't use BANG and OUCH all the time. Or WHAM and ZOWIE and POW. They're corny. Besides, the Flushing Chain of Comic Books covers about twenty titles a month—that means roughly five thousand separate panels or drawings. Now you figure that at least four thousand of those panels in every comic book represent somebody getting hit, lashed, flayed, burned, punched, beaten, shot, stabbed, or run over with a steamroller—that takes a lot of different noises and sounds for balloons.

"We strive for variety, understand? But variety alone is not enough. My boss, the publisher, Bloodengore Flushing, is a stickler for realism. He wants accurate sounds. So that's why we hold experiments. We beat up a victim and take down the noises for our balloons. Get it?"

I got it, but couldn't handle it. "You mean to say your comic books are drawn from real life?"

"More or less. That's where I come in. Mr. Flushing pays me a fortune, my dear sir, to mastermind the Flushing Chain. He endowed this laboratory, set up a fund for research, took me under contract for that purpose alone—to make sure that the sixty million readers of such famous comics as *Captain Torture* and *Hatchet Man* get only the finest and most realistic literature.

"Why, would you believe it, when I took over he only published three comic books and two of them were actually funny?

"It was ridiculous, and I told him so. Everybody knows that there's no point in a comic book that's funny! Why, people will laugh at it! What they want is thrills; girls with big busts and men with big muscles."

"I don't know much about comic books," I confessed. "I had rather a sketchy education. I thought people just wrote and drew them into some kind of an office."

"That's the old-fashioned way," Nork laughed. "Since I went to work for Flushing, we've changed all that. Ours is a great humanitarian enterprise; catering to sixty million readers as we do, bringing them romance, adventure, murder, arson, insanity, fratricide, bestiality. That's a great responsibility, my boy, and I am keenly aware of it.

"When I went to work for the Chain, I was just a broken-down old Nobel Prize winner, puttering around in a laboratory. I smashed a few atoms, that's just about all I did. Now I am engaged in a great cru-

sade to bring comic-book culture to the masses.

"That's why Flushing hired me. Up to the time I came here, comic books were put out just about the way you said they were: in offices, by artists and writers who worked solely with their imaginations. They kept thinking up new variants of Superman and that's about all they could do—occasionally they did a sort of Tarzan take-off or a Dick Tracy imitation. But it was stale, flat, repetitious.

"You see, the trouble was that they lacked *facts* to go by. They went stale because they didn't know anything about their subject matter. None of them had ever been to the jungle, let alone lived with gorillas. None of them had ever used a ray-gun or split a Jap spy's head open with a butcher's cleaver. None of them could walk through walls, or put on a suit of red underwear and fly through the air.

"That's where I came in. I brought the scientific method to bear, the experimental approach. Now all the artists and writers work from rough sketches and material supplied by me, here in my laboratory. Everything you see in Flushing Comics has been pre-tested and is guaranted accurate."

"You mean you've created a comic book world?" I gasped.

"More or less. Who do you think taught that gorilla to talk? I worked with him ever since he was a tiny rhesus; made him listen to Linguaphone records, everything. And why do you think our drawings are so accurate? Because I have an artist here sketching night and day; you saw me posing as the Mad Doctor with that girl when you came in. That's why I wore the false red beard—it looks better in color reproduction. Many people have been kind enough to tell me that I make the best and most convincing Mad Doctor they've ever seen."

"I'm sure you do," I said, politely.

"Take those fellows downstairs—they're working on the sound effects, as I told you. All over this great laboratory experiments are going on concurrently, and trained observers are noting the results; roughing out sketches, transcribing bits of dialogue, thinking up plots. The result is obvious—Flushing Comics today are beyond all doubt the most realistically gruesome, hideous, ghastly, sanguinary and horrible comics in the world;"

"But what about all those super-characters?" I asked. "You can teach gorillas to talk and pose for pictures and beat people up, but where do you get the ideas for those invincible heroes with the wonderful powers?"

"I give them the powers," purred Doctor Nork. "My experiments in nuclear physics, chemo-biology, endocrinology and mopery have borne fruit. Strange fruit. As you shall presently see. Speaking of fruit, it's time for luncheon. And now you'll have an opportunity to meet some of the actual characters I have created for Flushing Comics."

VIII

DOCTOR NORK and I dined in palatial splendor. For the first few minutes after our entry into the huge hall, we were alone, save for the silent servants; tall, white-faced men who stared straight ahead in impassive obeisance as they offered us our choice of delicacies.

"How well trained they are," I whispered, as one of the black-liveried footman served me with a helping of jugged flamingo and pickled eland tongues. "They never say a word, do they?"

"Not remarkable at all," said Doctor Nork, as he carved the *piece de resistance*—a huge baked wildebeeste head with an enormous apple in its mouth. "How can they say anything? Some of them are zombies and the rest of them are dead. I reanimated them myself, you know."

"I didn't know," I gulped. "And I'm not so sure I want to. You actually raised corpses up to be your servants?"

"Sure. Don't you read the comics? Scientists are always going into their laboratories and shooting a lot of electrical arcs through bodies. Had to try it myself just for the sake of accuracy. It worked. And after I had these cadavers animated again, and I had no other use for them except as servants. Still it worries me."

"Worried me, too," I agreed. "I don't like their looks."

"Oh, that doesn't matter, Nork replied. "I just don't want the Waiter's Union to

find out." He gnawed a yak-leg and offered me some jellied eel.

"Where are the other I was supposed to meet?" I asked.

"Others? They'll be along, I'm sure. Matter of fact, here they come now."

His remark was unnecessary. My bursting eardrums and bulging eyes attested to the arrival of some exceedingly strange strangers.

The first one to enter wasn't so bad—he was obviously human, despite his red cloak and the helmet he wore, which resembled an inverted *commode*. The only thing that disconcerted me in the least was the fact that he didn't walk in. He *flew*.

Behind him was a hopping figure. It might have been a gigantic frog with a human face. It might have been a gigantic human with a frog's body. Whatever it was, I didn't care for it.

Right behind the batrachian being stalked a tall man who displayed remarkable stoicism, in so far as his hair seemed to be on fire.

Even as I stared, my attention was arrested, tried, and condemned by another gentleman whose exceedingly long neck seemed to be made of wood. This neck was surmounted by a most unconventional head—flat on top, hooked in the rear, and round in front. There were no features visible in the round surface, which was shiny and metallic.

My eyes were still fighting the battle of the bulge when the girl came in. She was tall, slim, alluring; her body a pale shaft of moonlight and her hair a shimmering simulacrum of the sun. She wore a combination of leopard-skin bra and shorts that was very pretty, in spots.

I saw no reason why she needed to also wear a large boa-constrictor for a scarf—but she did. One would also assume that a wench with such long, lithe, lovely limbs might be satisfied to walk; but no, she had to ride on the back of a lion.

"Greetings!" said the girl, as the lion halted before us and began to slaver over my shoes.

"Hi," chirped Doctor Nork. He beamed at me. "Meet my daughter, Albino—the White Goddess of the Jungle."

"Your daughter?"

"Brought her up among the animals to be useful in my work. Decided to make a female Tarzan out of her at an early age, when she showed signs of inheriting my own fondness for wild game. You may not know it, but I used to be quite a sportsman myself. Earned quite a reputation as a deer-hunter in my youth—I was a fast man with a buck."

Albino sat down, unwound her snake, and replaced it with a napkin. She began to feed her lion from my plate.

"Pass the salt," she said.

I did so, trembling—a human salt-shaker. She noticed my tremor and sniffed disdainfully.

"Where'd you find this jerk, Pa?" she asked. "You know I don't like sissies."

I was all set to give her a snappy comeback, but something choked off my flow of conversation. That something was the boa-constrictor, which now began to twine around my neck. I removed it hastily and wiped my hands on what I thought was a napkin. But napkins don't roar.

I took my hands out of the lion's mane and turned to Doctor Nork. "What an aggregation," I murmured.

"All normal people," he assured me. "At least, they were until I got to work on them. You see before you, my dear sir, the results of years of experiments. My daughter was just a plain, ordinary little girl until I taught her how to behave like a monkey. In her case, all that was required was a little child psychology. Instead of giving her a doll to play with, I gave her a talking gorilla. The rest followed easily.

"In some of the other cases, surgery was necessary. Take Water Boy, for example."

"Who?"

HE INDICATED the frog-man. "One of Flushing Comics' most popular characters. I made him; raised him from a tadpole, as it were. As a result of a unique series of experiments, he's now more frog than human. It was a risky business to turn a man into a frog—more than once I thought he'd croak. But you can see for yourself how successful I've been."

Nork pointed at the man with the flaming hair. "That's Fire-Bug," he told me. "The Human Torch. Goes around giving

criminals the hot-foot. I developed his metabolism to the point where he can actually live on fire."

"That's why he's eating coal, eh?"

"Precisely. And as for our flying man, Rogers—"

"Buck Rogers?"

"No. Two-Dollar Rogers, we call him. He's twice as good as Buck."

I turned away in bewilderment. "Let me get this straight once and for all," I said. "You experiment on people and develop superhuman or unusual characteristics. Then you watch their actions and use what you see as the basis for plot-material in comic books."

"Right. Now—"

A violent pounding interrupted him. The strange being with the long wooden neck and the metallic head was using the blank spot where his face should be—using it as a walnut-cracker.

"Hammerhead," explained the Doctor. "Our readers get a bang out of him." He giggled. "Did you see our last issue featuring him? Had a sequence where he uses his head as an atom-smasher."

I tried to ignore the scientist's remarks and make a little time with Albino. But she obviously despised me for a weakling; just a poor coward who was probably secretly afraid of rhinocerii.

"Ow!"

THE shout came from down at the end of the table. Hammerhead had accidentally banged the fingers of Fire-Bug.

"Look what you're doing, clumsy!" he yelled.

"Don't get hot under the collar," retorted Hammerhead.

For answer, Fire-Bug opened his mouth, but no remarks came out. Instead, a six-foot tongue of living flame belched forth. Hammerhead ducked just in time, but Two-Dollar Rogers got smoke in his eyes. Rising, cloak whirling about him in red fury, the superhuman flier whipped out a strange, gleaming weapon and leveled it at the human torch.

"I'll blast you!" he yelled. Lightning crackled from the muzzle, and Fire-Bug ducked as an atomic beam disintegrated the chair in which he had been sitting. At the same time, he let go with another burst of flame.

Water Boy opened his frog-mouth and extinguished the blaze, inelegantly but effectively.

"Wet smack!" screamed Rogers, leveling his weapon. Fire-Bug turned toward him, ready to blaze away. Hammerhead poised himself to pound him down.

"Quiet!" screamed Doctor Nork. "Cut it out—get out of here, all of you. If you can't learn to behave and get along with one another, I'll—I'll turn the Faceless Fiend loose on you!"

There was a deathly silence.

"There," said the Doctor. "That's telling them, eh? But where are you?"

"Here," I gasped. "Right here—"under the table."

Albino sniffed.

"I—uh—dropped my fork," I said.

"You're scared," she accused. "I can tell by the way your hand trembles."

"What hand?"

"The one on my ankle. Take it off."

I ROSE and took my place again. "All right," I said. "I *am* scared. Who wouldn't be with all this blasting and firing and pounding going on?"

"If you think these characters are bad, you ought to see the Faceless Fiend," she told me.

"Who is he? I noticed everybody shut up when his name was mentioned.

Nork's face clouded. He sighed heavily and reached for a platter of breaded horse-kidneys. "One of my few failures," he murmured. "Some of my agents spirited away a mass-murderer from the penal colony in French Guiana. That's where I get most of my subjects—you'll find that comic book characters are best when they have criminal minds.

"Anyhow, this time I intended to create a super-criminal for a new book. The man was frightfully disfigured, and as a first step I attempted to remedy his condition with plastic surgery. At the same time, I began psychiatric treatment with deep hypnosis; my aim was to uncondition all his reflexes and hibit all his inhibitions. This I did, while working on his face to remove the scars.

"ALAS, I did my work too well. I had him in a state of complete abandon, psychically, long before his features were rebuilt by plastic surgery. As a matter of fact, I had just finished removing his old features and hadn't gotten around to building new ones when he—escaped. Ran away.

"Of course, when the poor fellow removed the bandages, he found that he had no face left at all. This, coupled with his mental unbalance, resulted in the creation of the perfect super-criminal: the Faceless Fiend.

"Nobody knows what he looks like, because he doesn't look like anyone. He has no scruples—just hatred of society. Gifted with superhuman cunning, he has managed to evade capture and even now is lurking somewhere on this island. I've sent my staff out time and time again to comb the jungles for him. I imported several beachcombers just to comb the beaches. But he eludes me.

"Meanwhile he swears vengeance on me and all my work. He threatens me in a million ways. I am convinced it is he who writes letters to the press denouncing comic books."

"Say, wait a minute," I said. "I wonder if he wrote that note?"

I told him about the message I'd found in a bottle on the beach.

"That's his work," Nork nodded. "A dangerous adversary, my friend."

The gorilla shuffled into the room and tapped the Doctor on the shoulder.

"Sorry to interrupt," he said, "but it's time for you to come down to the crocodile pits.

We're getting ready to draw that sequence where Wonder Child ties their tails into Boy Scout knots. If we get that out of the way this afternoon, we can go right on to the scene where he strangles his grandmother—right?"

"Right." Nork rose. "Excuse me," he said. "The press of business affairs. Perhaps you're tired. I'll ask Albino to see you to your room."

"Follow me," the girl urged. "Do you want to ride my lion?"

"No thanks, I'll walk."

We left the banquet hall and ascended a spiral staircase. The blonde girl led me into a handsomely furnished bedroom.

"Maybe a little sleep will quiet your nerves," she observed. The scorn in her voice was evident.

"I'll be all right, thanks," I said. "Oh—what's that?"

A rumbling rose, and the air was suddenly suffused with blue flame.

"Nothing at all, scaredy-cat," she snickered. "Just a little hurricane coming up, I suppose."

"Hurricane?"

I stared out of the window and saw that she spoke the truth.

IX

THE storm was gathering over the tropical isle. Water boiled lake lava across the beach. The palmettos prostrated themselves before the fury of the storm. Wind roared from all points of the compass, and the currents clashed overhead to tear the very air to ribbons.

A kaleidoscopic cloud of macaws blew across the island, followed by a white cumulus of seagulls—borne ruthlessly away by the violence of the elements.

"Quit shaking, you coward!" taunted the girl. "I'll turn on the the lights." She did so. I collapsed across the bed, watching the onslaught of the storm. The walls trembled and I followed suit.

"Oh, you're impossible," she told me. "Just like all the other men I've ever met—afraid of everything."

"You can't blame me," I replied. "After all, not everybody has had your advantages. Being brought up by a gorilla, and all that."

"Never mind the excuses," Albino said. "It doesn't matter. I've been the White Goddess of the Jungle here for five years, and I'm getting pretty darn sick of it, too. Always waiting for some strong, handsome, virile he-man to come along and woo me, like they do in the comic books. And what do I get? A bunch of weaklings, namby-pamby characters who are afraid of everything—lions, snakes, hurricanes."

"And you're not afraid of anything?"

"Of course not."

"You're sure?"

There was a crash overhead and suddenly

the lights went out. The room was black—an inky vacuum in the dark womb of storm.

I winced, but the girl's voice rose strong and clear in the darkness.

"I fear nothing," she told me. Not even the Faceless Fiend himself."

"That's very good to hear. I'd hate to have caused you any discomfort."

"What's that?" I yelled. "Who said that?"

"Me. The Faceless Fiend."

"You're here—in this room?"

"Just came in through a secret staircase," the slow voice hissed. "I've been waiting to get my hands on you ever since you arrived."

"You don't say," I answered, hurling myself in the direction of the door. Thunder boomed and wind howled.

"Don't try to escape," chuckled the unseen presence. "You can't see in the dark, but I can. And I'm going to get you."

"Help!" I yelled. "Albino—save me!"

"Stay where you are," the girl commanded. "I'm coming."

"So am I!" cackled the menacing voice.

I whirled, then cried out.

"Ouch!" I yelled. Something hit me in the back of my neck.

It was the ceiling.

X

WHEN I opened my eyes, I was lying strapped to a table in a long, narrow underground chamber. Blue light flickered in mephitic gloom. Crouching above me was a cloaked figure. I stared up and was rewarded only by a blank look. This creature, this monster, this being with an empty gap between neck and hairline, was something not to be countenanced. It was beyond all doubt the Faceless Fiend. His chuckle sounded out of emptiness, slithering off the slimy walls.

"Don't look so unhappy, my friend," he purred. "You ought to thank me for rescuing you. Here you are, safe and sound in a nice, comfortable sewer, while above us the entire laboratory has collapsed."

"Collapsed? Was it lightning?"

"No, just rain. The place just melted away."

"How could that be?"

"Simple," explained my captor. "Doctor Nork built it all out of guano. Apparently he didn't feed the seagulls enough cement. At any rate, the entire structure has been demolished—and your friends have all perished. No one is left but the two of us."

"Dead?" I cried. "All of them—you're sure?"

"Beyond a doubt. It's an end to the whole insane scheme; the comic books will go out of existence, and Doctor Nork will no longer be free to perpetrate his wicked experiments in the name of science."

"But the girl," I persisted. "Albino, she was in the room with us—"

"I snatched you through the trapdoor and down the secret staircase just in time. I'm afraid you'll have to face it. We're alone. And now, speaking of facing it—"

The cloaked figure stooped to the side of the table and rose again. One hand clutched a small saw. "Speaking of facing it," he continued, "I am about to perform a small experiment of my own. Ever since I lost my face, I've waited for a chance to find another. I hid down here in the sewers under the laboratory and bided my time. I didn't want to take a stupid mug like Nork's and I certainly wouldn't appropriate the visage of any of his monsters.

"But when you flew in to the island this morning, I knew my long vigil was over. Sorry, I cannot offer you any anesthetic, but time is short."

"You—you mean you're going to steal my face?" I screamed.

"I prefer to think of it as a little face-lifting job," answered my captor. "Please now; just relax."

The Faceless Fiend bent forward, saw in hand. It was a typical scene from a comic book story—as such, it probably would have delighted ten million dear little kiddies throughout the land. But it didn't amuse me in the least.

The saw grazed my neck—

A roar shattered the walls. A tawny blur bore the cloaked figure backwards into the shadows. There were screams, and growls, and other less pleasant noises generally heard only at presidential conventions or in zoos.

"Good work!"

Albino was at my side, using the saw on the ropes that bound me. She gestured to

wards the shadows of the sewer beyond, where the lion was now creating a Bodiless Fiend.

"We got through the trapdoor in time, just behind you. Then part of the walls gave, and we were delayed—but not too long."

"Then it's true," I said. "The laboratory is destroyed?"

"Everything's gone," she sighed. "Even this sewer isn't safe much longer. Let's get out of here."

A crash accented her words. Turning, I saw that the shadowed portion of the sewer had disappeared, hiding both the lion and the Faceless Fiend from view forever beneath fresh debris.

"This way," Albino urged, pulling me along the corridor. "There should be a sewer outlet to the beach."

"Thanks for rescuing me," I panted.

"Think nothing of it," the girl answered. "That's just a reflex action, you know. Been rescuing people for years now for the comics."

The damp walls of the sewer twisted and turned. We raced along, Albino taking a lithe-limbed lead. She rounded a curve ahead of me and I blundered forward.

Suddenly she screamed.

I turned the corner and grasped her arm.

"What's the matter?" I said.

The girl stood there shaking in a frenzy of fear.

"Eeeeeh!" she shrieked. "Take it away!"

"Huh?" I said.

For answer, she clung to me and threw herself forward and upward into my arms. I held her close.

"Look!" she sobbed. "Down there—make it go away!"

"Where?" I asked.

"There."

"But—it's only a mouse," I said.

She began to cry. I stepped forward, carrying her in my arms, and the mouse retreated to its burrow with a shrill squeak.

Albino was weeping hysterically, and the more she cried the more I grinned.

"There, there," I said. "Don't you worry. I'll protect you."

There isn't much more to tell. By the time we emerged upon the broad expanse of the beach, the hurricane had blown away and only a gentle rain fell upon the ruins of the big laboratory on the cliff.

Despite my fears, I found the plane quite undamaged, save for a minor accident that had crumpled part of the landing gear. As it was, I managed a takeoff and a subsequent landing some hours later in the airport at Jamaica.

Within a day Albino and I were back in civilization. I managed to sell her on the notion, while *en route*, that her brand of courage was of no value in New York.

"People seldom encounter lions and tigers in the city," I told her, "but the place is simply lousy with mice. What you need is someone like me to protect you."

She agreed, meekly enough. And that's why we were married, even before I reported to my editor with the story.

That episode is still painful in my memory. Being called a liar and a drunkard is bad enough, but when he accused me of opium-smoking, there was only one course left open to me.

"I resign!" I shouted, as he booted me down the stairs.

Still, it's all over now, and Albino doesn't mind. I have a new job—bought a little newsstand over on Seventh Avenue. I don't make much money selling newspapers, but there's always enough to buy a few mousetraps for the house.

Besides, I manage to sell quite a lot of comic books. . . .

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The Will of Raminchantra

BY STANTON A. COBLENTZ

I

I WAS not surprised at the news that Clem Ravenow had gone to India. But I could not quite believe it, fifteen years later, when I heard that he had returned on a visit to his parents in the

Summoned by one they said was not quite sane for an experience not at all usual.

Heading by Fred Humiston

Bronx, and now called himself Swami Raminchantra.

In the old days at high school, Clem had never been one of the gang. A tall, green-sweatered, stoop-shouldered stick of a boy, who always carried a hidden book about him like a secret sin, he never came out for a game of football or basketball in the school yard, or shared in the jovial rough-and-tumble in the streets or school corridors. But he would look at you with the most wondering, innocent air, from some yellowing tome on "Arcana of the East" or "The Meaning and Practice of Yogi," and his bespectacled dark eyes wouldn't seem to be seeing things of this world. Clem Ravenow, we all laughingly agreed, would never amount to much in life.

I had almost forgotten him, of course, at the time of his return. And when I went to visit him at the Ravenow family apartment on Southern Boulevard, I was not really prompted by interest in him so much as by curiosity as to whether there was any truth in this story of his having become a swami. By this time I was a successful realtor, with some choice income property in my name, and a substantial bank credit; and there was nothing I despised more than mysticism and humbug in any form. And so, if truth be told, I had really delegated myself as a one-man committee of exposure. I little foresaw what I was bringing down upon my head.

I do not know just what I expected to find—perhaps a turbaned, black-bearded man in a long robe. Actually, he was dressed conventionally enough, though green-sweatered and open-necked as of old. His face, I noticed, was tanned, and of an ascetic thinness; his whole body looked even thinner and taller than before; but he was no longer stoop-shouldered, and there was an assurance of resolute manhood I had not expected to find; while his round black eyes—bespectacled no more—burned with a steady concentrated intensity that made it difficult to meet his gaze.

"Glad to see you, Andy!" he greeted me, in a sufficiently matter-of-fact way, as if not at all surprised by my unannounced call.

"I knew, of course, you were coming."

"How the deuce did you know?"

Apparently he thought this question unworthy of an answer.

"I'm always delighted to see my old comrades," he went on, "even though the karmic tie is but a slight one. That is why I summoned you."

"You—summoned me?" I blurted out. "The devil you did! I came because I wanted to."

"So you imagine, Andy," he conceded, mildly, in the manner of one who deems it not worthwhile to argue with a child. "In such cases, it always *seems* a matter of free will."

It was now quite clear that India had gone to Clem's head, killing the slight trace of reason he had once shown. But while I stood staring at him open-mouthed, trying to frame some suitable reply to his nonsense, he went on, solemnly.

"I have a purpose to perform, of course, on my visit to the Occident—which, fortunately, is destined to be brief. So I did not call you here for any frivolous purpose. It is my aim to demonstrate, to a few susceptible minds, some of the rudiments of occult truth, so far as I have penetrated it in my studies—"

"Occult truth—baloney!" I managed to break out, at last regaining my voice. "If you think I can be taken in by any of that hooey—"

"It is a common fault of you westerners, Andy," he went on, in a manner of infinite patience, "to judge without waiting for the evidence. If you will allow me a little time, you will be able to see for yourself."

"I can see for myself," I sneered, "into any fake or fraud ever perpetrated."

A FAINTLY sarcastic smile touched the thin lips. A glint as of secret amusement shone in the dark eyes. And at the same instant, to my surprise, Clem reached for his hat. "Andy," he proposed, "let's go for a stroll in the park. Under the green leaves and blue skies, we'll be open to truths you'd never perceive in this musty apartment."

Taking my arm, he started to lead me gently away. To this day, I cannot understand why I consented to go. My car was waiting just outside; and except when it was necessary to go out and show a piece of

property, there was nothing I abominated more than walking. None the less, I found myself heading at Clem's side in the direction of the Bronx Park.

We passed the entrance to the zoo, and wound in silence along paths strewn with the red, tan and golden of fall. But we did not pause until we had reached the green seclusion of a hemlock grove, with the river swishing musically below and the trees arching magnificently above. Then Clem turned to me with a fiercer light than ever in his eyes, a sort of black brilliance such as I had never seen before in any human gaze; and for the first time I began to feel afraid, and wished nothing more than to escape this weird companion. But my will was a prisoner; and when he bade me be seated beside him on a bed of hemlock needles, I obeyed without a word, though there was nothing I wished less than a seat on the ground.

"Do you still believe," he asked mildly, "that all I stand for is a fake and a fraud?"

I retained sufficient mastery of myself to gasp some vaguely in the affirmative. But how soon I was to regret my words!

"I knew your disbelief, of course," he mumbled. "But I wanted the confession from your own lips."

Even as he spoke, he made a series of queer passes with his hands. Then he began to utter something more to himself than to me, in low monotonous tones that rose from a murmur to a chant, then back from a chant to a murmur, then again to a chant. The speech was some foreign gibberish, something like "Oh me to no, oh me to mo," the same syllables being repeated over and over again; but there was something bewitching about it, I cannot say just why; there was a certain rhythm that caught me, lulled me, captivated me—it had a hypnotizing effect, beyond my power to resist. The last thing I would have have believed, a few minutes before, was the old superstitious gabble about magicians weaving spells over their victims; but if Raminchantra was not a magician, and I his victim, then neither was I seated here beneath the hemlocks of the Bronx Park, fixing my unwilling gaze upon those shining black fires of my seducer's eyes.

After a few minutes, while he still continued in a singsong voice, "Oh me to mo, oh me to mo," it seemed as if something were plucking at the very strings of my brain, and a dazed, swimming sensation came over me. Then his tones changed, and almost in a whisper, yet in recognizable English, I heard him saying, as if in prayer to some unknown deity, "May the eyes of this blind one for a moment be opened!" Then strangely his own eyes closed; his dark brow became furrowed as if with intense concentration of thought; and I felt his will carrying me along with it like a mighty wind.

II

I HESITATE to tell the next stage of my experience. People will say that it was all a dream, an hallucination; that I had gone completely out of my wits. But I, Andrew J. Goldstone, member of the Bronx Realty Board, the Rotary Club and other down-to-earth organizations, am the last man to have dreams and hallucinations. No, it was all real, amazingly, devastatingly real, although so uncanny that it fills me with fresh astonishment every time I recall it.

All at once my companion seemed to be growing smaller. Rapidly he dwindled to the dimensions of a child, of an infant, while with closed eyes and an expression of enormous concentration he still sat facing me. At the same time, the trees, the river, the whole world began to diminish, until it seemed that I, grown gigantically large, was looking down upon a miniature park. After a minute or two, my head was projecting among the trees, the open sky was above me, and I had lost sight of Raminchantra. Let me try to give some idea of my sensations: my own volition played no part whatever; I was merely the witness of scenes unravelled before me, which I had no more share in producing than I had in creating a motion picture I saw on the screen. But no motion picture could have been so vividly real.

In a sort of nightmarish consternation, I found myself rising in air. And as I rose, the earth dwindled out of all proportion to my ascent. Within a minute, I saw the whole great highway-threaded stretch of the park beneath me, the whole vast waste of

apartment buildings and huddled homes that made up the Bronx; but they seemed minute, like sections of a child's city; and each moment they were growing smaller. Soon all of Greater New York, the long river-guarded wedge of Manhattan, the immense flats of Brooklyn and Queens, the rolling foliage-clad hills of Westchester County, Staten Island and New Jersey, were flung beneath me in one widening panorama. But they were not as I had once seen them from an airplane; they were much smaller, like the sections of a toy community; while I myself, by comparison, appeared a preposterous giant.

Buoyed by a force beyond myself, I was still rising. Soon it seemed that half of lower New York State, Connecticut and New Jersey lay beneath me; soon all the eastern seaboard spread below, while at an incalculable speed I was reaching a height of scores of miles. But the illusion persisted that I, still of gargantuan size, was looking down upon a dwarfish earth.

It was the same when, after what seemed but a slight interval, the entire planet was rolling beneath me—a sphere of light and darkness, of vari-tinted green, silver, blue, buff and gray that looked scarcely larger than a colored school globe. And it was still the same after this globe had dwindled to the size of a marble, of a pea, of a grain of sand; still the same when other planets —Mars, Jupiter, Saturn—hove into view in the distance and vanished; still the same when I seemed to be speeding into the terrible blackness of interstellar space.

"God in heaven!" I muttered to myself. "Am I going out of the universe entirely?"

It really looked as if this were so. The Solar System had waned to the dimensions of a cluster of fireflies; for a long while I seemed swallowed up in the blackness of the gulf between the suns. But I had the impression that my speed, already many times that of light, was constantly being accelerated. It is an understatement to say that I was appalled when I found myself shooting by another sun—a double sun, with one brilliant yellow luminary, and one pale blue, and some twinkling motes of planets scattered between. Onward and onward I went, like a traveler on an express train who cannot halt at way stations; and always it seemed to me that the scale of the universe was diminishing, while I was growing larger. Eventually dozens of suns were blazing above me, beneath me, and all around me, so near that I felt as if I could have reached out and grasped them.

THEN suns by the cluster were receding from me; whole galaxies, twisted spiral-shaped, began to form about me as I alternately plunged into unspeakable oceans of blackness and came out into blazing continents of light. Even the galaxies, each with their hundreds of millions or billions of suns, seemed smaller than I! And they continued to dwindle until they were mere pinpricks of light amid a void immensity; continued to dwindle until the heavens were flecked with island universes as the ordinary night skies with stars. "God have mercy on my soul!" I could not help muttering a prayer. "Am I headed for eternal damnation?"

Certainly, I seemed to be among the damned. I doubt if it is possible to experience greater terror than mine as I went careening millions of light years into that unimaginable vastness; I doubt if anyone could have felt more alone as some omnopotent force kept widening the distance between me and everything familiar. Yet—and this was the most horrifying part of it all—it did not actually seem that I was alone; it seemed as if mighty presences, unhuman and invisible, were keeping pace with my flight, buoying me along my way, leering at me out of the unseen, using me for some inscrutable purpose. It was this that filled me with such excess of fear that I could have screamed.

Finally I had passed even beyond the galaxies. I had entered a gulf of blankness —black, all-enveloping, meaningless. In the distance the constellations of universes —constellations each composed of myriads of Milky Ways—dimmed and vanished. I had grown to such dimensions that I seemed larger than them all; and yet, by some diabolical irony, I was as nothing at all—a mote, an atom swallowed up in an infinity of emptiness.

I cannot begin to reckon the ensuing events in time. My impression was that a tremendously protracted period went by—

hours, days, weeks, months, while I still had the sense of speeding through that monstrous vacancy, across distances that made the whole starry universe no more by comparison than the breadth of a gnat-wing. And then, when it seemed that there was to be no end of this pilgrimage through the dark, I reached the astounding climax of my adventure.

III

ONCE more I was startled by an awareness of light. From the faintest remote shimmering, barely discernible to my eyes, it expanded into a broad, luminous, slightly curving belt, unlike anything I had ever seen before. As I approached, the belt expanded, until it became a sort of wall, which reached from rim to rim of the universe, beneath and above as far as I could see, blazing with variable fires of deep-red, purple, indigo, orange, and emerald—fires so fierce that an ordinary gaze could not have dwelt upon them, although, surprisingly, they seemed not to affect my eyes.

And before this great wall I halted, a mere pygmy, a dot beside it. Was this the rampart at the edge of creation, the barrier that divided all that existed from the non-existent? Or was it the boundary that separated the known universe from something diviner, more majestic and beautiful, more truly moulded to the heart's desire?

Somehow I knew it was the latter; knew that beyond this bulwark of light there dwelt wonders past reckoning—the satisfaction of all baffled hopes, dreams and aspirations, the paradise of the religious, the Utopia of the dreamer, the goal of the longing of poets, prophets and lovers throughout the ages. How did I know all this? It was as if some deeper voice had spoken it all to me in tones of crystal truth. Hence I was filled with a passionate craving to pass that wall. And I fluttered about it moth-like, though the blades of ever-changing colored light were as swords to keep me out.

"Have I come so far only to be turned back?" I cried in despair. "Let me pass, let me pass the wall!"

From beyond the barrier, I thought I could hear sounds. There was a weird murmuring, a commotion as of the swishing of great wings; there were notes as of music, but music like no other I had ever heard—full-throated, organ-like, and yet lyrically sweet in a way that made me want to listen forever.

"Let me pass, let me pass the wall!" I begged, in a fervor of desire. "Let me pass, and never return!"

But from somewhere in the emptiness a voice seemed to answer. "Not now! Not for ages! Not until you have ascended above time and mortality!"

"Not now? Not for ages?" I wailed back. "But who can ascend above time and mortality?"

For answer, there came a faint peal through the darkness. It was a peal as of sardonic mockery, the mockery of some unseen witness; and it was joined from the distance by other peals, low and resonant, and equally of mockery . . . until it seemed to me that I was the target of the laughter of a mysterious host. And at this I cried out again, in rage and yet in dread of that uncanny assemblage; and in response there came a roar, which boomed with a concentrated power as if from the very throat of the universe, "Mortal, back to your mortality!" And suddenly I reeled, and everything about me swam; the wall of light wavered, then seemed to topple toward me in cataracts of flame and sparks; and as I felt the absolute of terror sweeping over me, and struggled to avoid the fiery inundation, all at once everything went black, the collapsing wall of light vanished, and numbness and coldness overcame me.

I OPENED my eyes to find myself seated at Clem Ravenow's side beneath the hemlocks of the Bronx Park. His lids were still closed, and his brow ruffled as if with intense concentration. But the shadow of the sun on a little pond of the river below appeared to be just where I had last seen it.

"I—I've had a most remarkable dream," I muttered, still more than a little dazed.

My companion's dark eyes opened, and he looked at me for a moment with a penetrating gaze.

"It was no dream," he answered, calmly. "I can tell you just what you saw."

To my astonishment, he described my

supposed dream, down to the minutest detail.

"It was my will," he confided, "that the substance of one of my own experiences should be transmitted to you. You were not seeing through your eyes, but through mine —were seeing into reality as it has been revealed to me during my trances. I was merely transferring my perceptions to you. Would you like another demonstration?"

"No, thank you!" I refused, as I struggled to my feet. But from his throat there came a peal of slightly sardonic mockery, reminding me of the derision of the unseen on the far rim of space.

Leaving him there among the hemlocks, I staggered out of the park. A week later, I heard the welcome news that he had left for India. But ever since, when one of the boys has referred jauntily to "that humbug, Clem Ravenow," I have held a moody silence.

My friends tell me that I am much changed, more sober, less skeptical, and more respectful of other people's beliefs than of old; and if I did not want them to think me crazier than a bat, I would answer that this is all due to a few minutes spent in a city park beneath the will of Raminchantra.

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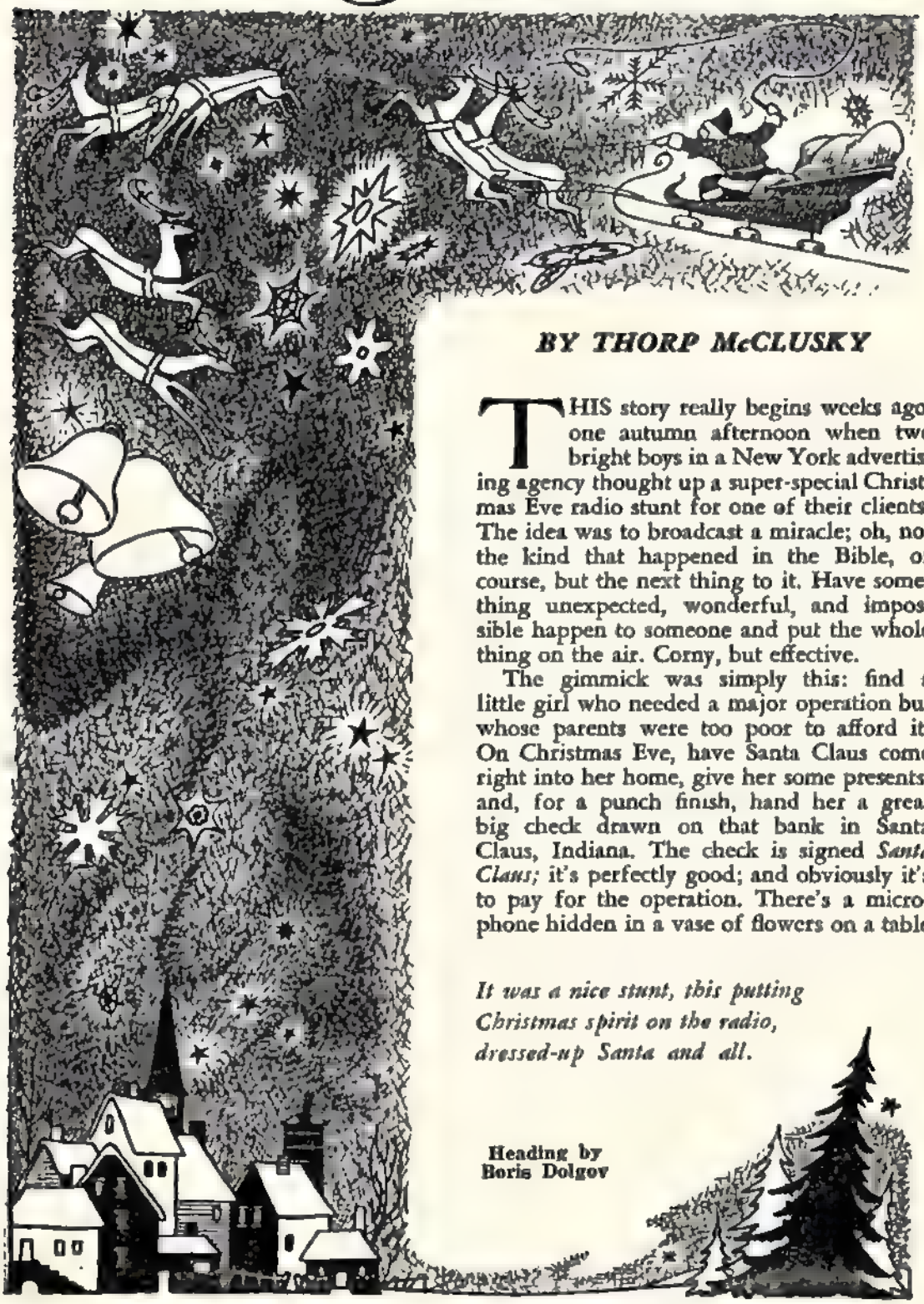

BY THORP McCLUSKY

THIS story really begins weeks ago, one autumn afternoon when two bright boys in a New York advertising agency thought up a super-special Christmas Eve radio stunt for one of their clients. The idea was to broadcast a miracle; oh, not the kind that happened in the Bible, of course, but the next thing to it. Have something unexpected, wonderful, and impossible happen to someone and put the whole thing on the air. Corny, but effective.

The gimmick was simply this: find a little girl who needed a major operation but whose parents were too poor to afford it. On Christmas Eve, have Santa Claus come right into her home, give her some presents, and, for a punch finish, hand her a great big check drawn on that bank in Santa Claus, Indiana. The check is signed *Santa Claus;* it's perfectly good; and obviously it's to pay for the operation. There's a microphone hidden in a vase of flowers on a table

It was a nice stunt, this putting Christmas spirit on the radio, dressed-up Santa and all.

Heading by Boris Dolgov

right beside the little girl's wheelchair, and a couple of others concealed around the living room. Everything completely extemporaneous.

The idea was terrific, all right. Sure fire. Couldn't miss. More punch than Lionel Barrymore playing Scrooge in Dicken's *A Christmas Carol*. Not even a word of commercial—just let the public go around asking, "Say, did you hear that program *The Spirit of Christmas* on the radio Christmas Eve? Who put it on, anyway; the network, or some sponsor smart enough not to plug his product for once?"

And, of course, the news would leak out ultimately who'd footed the bills. Get the sweet, beautiful, lovely indirection of it all?

Well, we scouted around and found a suitable little girl in a tiny New England village. She was six, going on seven, pretty as a doll and sweet, really sweet. A year before she'd had a fall and injured her spine. She was paralyzed from the waist down, and only one of those big-shot specialists could fix her up. Her parents were made-to-order, too—both kids in their twenties, presentable, loving each other and their daughter, honest, hard-working, poor as church mice and worried to death. Get the poignancy of the set-up?

We gave the parents microphone tests and their voices projected fine; we wouldn't even have to use actors to double for them. In the afternoon of December 25 we installed and tested the equipment while the little girl was taking her nap. We stuck a portable, soundproof control-room in the dinning room and cut narrows slits through the living room wall so we could see that was going on in there. There was a little red light behind where the little girl's wheelchair would be so the parents could tell when they were on the air. We had a record-player and telephone connections; and we'd gone to the trouble of having a delivery truck painted bright red with a big, jolly looking portrait of Santa Claus on the side. You see, Santa Claus would have to drive out from the village—and we wanted the little girl's reaction to be realistic when she got her first glimpse of Old Whiskers from the living room window. We even hired Tim Donovan to play the part of Santa; you know Tim, how big he is and what a magnificent voice he's got and how he can ad-lib better than any other actor in radio.

We went on the air right on the dot, coast-to-coast, with a recording of *Silent Night, Holy Night,* fading behind Jim Allen and that butter-wouldn't-melt-in-my-mouth narrative voice of his. "Good evening, all, and a very Merry Christmas to everyone, everywhere," Jim drooled. "During the next half hour . . . blah, blah, blah . . . a program so unique, so unusual, so heart-warming . . . blah, blah, blah'—putting the radio audience wise. It was a prepared introduction, and it was beautiful prose; Abe Lincoln couldn't have written any better. But it made me sick, just the same. What difference did it make if we kept the name of the family and the village out of the broadcast?—the whole country would find out soon enough. I didn't like any part of what we were doing—except the check we would give the kid.

WELL, as soon as Allen finished reading the phone rang, and Santa Claus Donovan announced from the village that he would start in just so many minutes. Then the little red bulb lit up and we brought in the family, all singing *Jingle Bells* as prearranged—very Chrismasy and gay. When the song was finished the father coughed, very nervous, and said, "Your back, Jane. How does it feel?"

You could tell the little girl was surprised. She piped right back, "It doesn't hurt at all, Daddy. Why should it? It never hurts much anymore."

I grinned all over when she said that.

"Well," the father persisted, forcing the point as per instructions, "I just wondered if it might be hurting." Then he switched hurriedly to, "Hmmm! I wouldn't be surprised, Jane, if Santa Claus will be along any minute now."

Jane was skeptical. "Why are you so sure I'll see Santa Claus this year, Daddy?" she wanted to know. "Every other year you always said he wouldn't come until after I was asleep."

The father started to muff that one, but the mother jumped right in with gentle assurance, "This year, Jane, Santa is making his rounds in a big, shiny, new red automo-

bile. He can travel a lot faster than by reindeer, so he'll be around much earlier."

Trust a woman to think faster than a man in a pinch every time.

Well, the family chatter went on for a a minute or so longer, then Jim Allen cut in again, pompous as usual, "Santa Claus, driving the big red delivery truck, has now left the village and is on his way to Jane's house. In just thirty seconds Jane will see him coming over the crest of the hill."

And in just thirty seconds Jane's father, who was watching out the window, tipped her off. 'Look, Jane! Here he comes now! Santa Claus!"

I never heard a child squeal or clap her hands so much. "Ooooh! It's Santa Claus! It's Santa Claus! It's Santa Claus!" Jane babbled, over and over again in that high, choked voice of pure happiness, and the family chimed in, too. It really got me for an instant. Jim Allen—than whom nobody on earth and maybe in Heaven too loves the sound of his own voice better—almost ruined the whole effect with his big trap by pontificating, "Ah, now Santa Claus is approaching so fast you'd almost think he was flying. We're even excited ourselves, here in the control room, as we watch that big red truck zoom over the hill and down the snowy road! Now it's turning into the yard. It's a thrilling sight, really thrilling."

You'd have thought he was reporting a sports event. But he couldn't steal the show no matter how much he loused it up; there was too much honest-to-goodness drama going on in that living room. You could hear everything—the door opening, the whistle of the storm—and boy, it was really a blizzard! You could almost feel the cold rush in before the door closed.

"Merry Christmas, everybody!" Santa Claus boomed—and I mean boomed. Jane promptly burst out crying. And the father and mother both said, "Merry Christmas, Santa Claus," while the mother added, so softly that few listeners caught it, "God bless you!"

I can't understand it, but for once Jim Allen decided to keep his yap shut. He didn't utter a word while Santa spoke to Jane, "Don't cry, Jane. This is no time to be sad; this is the happiest night in the year. Dry your tears and look at the wonderful presents I've brought you. A doll—a beautiful, beautiful doll . . ."

"I wasn't crying because I'm sad but because I'm glad," Jane protested, as her sniffles quickly ceased. "Ooooh!—what a beautiful doll. . . !"

Well, Jim had to horn in again. "The doll is very lifelike," he gloated. "Its eyes open and shut and it has two expressions—a great big smile and a sad, sad frown."

He should have been an auctioneer.

"And here's some pretty nighties for you," Santa Claus continued. "Pink, and white, and lavendar—and trimmed with lace and ribbons. And a pair of lovely red slippers, and a royal blue robe. . . ."

THAT set Jane off crying again worse than ever, and even Jim Allen, who seldom recognizes drama unless it's spelled out to him in capital letters, knew enough to keep still. "Nighties," Jane was sobbing. "Slippers. Robe. They're just what I want, Santa Claus, because I'm in bed almost all the time. I can't walk, Santa Claus. I can't walk again ever."

All I could think of just then was that the ghouls who had thought up this show must really be having a swell time for themselves, listening.

Santa Claus cut right in with the punch announcement. "Oh, yes you can walk again, Jane! And very soon, too. Next week your father and mothers are going to take you to the hospital and a very nice man is going to do something to your back that will make you all well again. And here is a piece of paper—Santa's own personal check (you know what a check is, don't you, Jane?)—that will pay for everything. So there's no reason to cry any more at all, is there, Jane?"

And of course Jim Allen had to flap his tonsils some more and explain about the check and the Santa Claus, Indiana bank. Jane was still sobbing, but it was the happy kind, all mixed up with incoherent words of gratitude. The father said soberly, "We can't thank you enough for this, Santa Claus. It means everything in the world to Jane." And once again the mother whispered, "God bless you."

They were a wonderful couple.

Then Santa started to leave. He was very businesslike about it, too; no dawdling or

mushiness of the sort I expected from Donovan. Without hurrying, but also like a man with plenty of other business to attend to and not any too much time, he said briskly, "Well, Jane, I have lots of other boys and girls to visit tonight; I must be getting along. So goodby—and the best of everything in life for you, for many, many happy years—for as long as God wills that you live."

It sounded screwy to me—not the sort of thing Donovan would say. Jane seemed to sense a strange finality in that farewell, too, for she pleaded, almost panic-stricken, "Won't I see you again next year, Santa? Aren't you coming back again, ever?"

Santa Claus only said, very gently, "Well, Jane, I don't know. If you need me enough, and if you have enough faith. . . ." And he smiled reassuringly.

It was completely screwy. None of that mawkish tripe about being a good little girl —none of that rigmarole at all. Just need, and faith. I thought Donovan must have decided to commit professional suicide—but good!

The door opened, letting in the sound of the storm again, and closed. Santa was gone. Everybody in the living room started talking at once, and the talk and gasps and sobs and laughter coming over were really heart-warming, at that. Then Jim Allen cut in, still unctuous but urgent. "Something's gone wrong here," he announced portentously. "Santa Claus' watch must have been running ahead of ours. The schedule called for him to remain another three minutes, but, as we all know, he's already left. His explanation should be interesting. Probably he'll phone in from the village any minute now. In the meantime, we'll just go on listening to happy Jane and her family, in the living-room."

Well, we listened another fifteen seconds, maybe, while Jane's folks were putting her presents over under the tree—and then we got the surprise of our lives. Another red truck rolled into the driveway, and a second Santa walked into that living room.

It was a ticklish situation. Who was this guy, anyway? What would he say? Did he even know we were on the air?

The mother's nerves, strained to the limit by the ordeal she'd already undergone, just let go; she went off into hysterical laughter mingled with racking sobs. The father whispered to her fiercely, "Get hold of yourself! We're still on the radio, do you understand? I don't know who this fellow is, but he could be Art Phelps. He's about Art's size."

And Jim Allen, of course, licked his chops and orated, "Well! Well! Well! What have we here? A second Santa has showed up, no doubt someone from the village. Here's drama nobody expected. Who is he? As soon as we find out, we'll let you know. Ah, this would warm the heart of old Scrooge himself!"

Santa Claus Two was a showman all right. "Ho! Ho! Ho!" he bellowed jovially. "If it isn't good little Jane herself! Here's Santa Claus with lots of wonderful presents for you Jane, because you've been such a good little girl all year!"

THERE was an instant's silence, then Jane said defiantly, "You're not the real Santa Caus; you're just a great big fake. That's just an old false face you've got on; I can see the string behind your ears."

"Ho! Ho! Ho!" Santa Two boomed. "Don't you worry about string behind my ears! I'm the real Santa Claus all right!" And Jim Allen was sounding off hurriedly, "Aha, the mystery is solved, folks! This Santa Claus who just came in is *our* Santa; he just held up a card on which he'd printed DELAYED; SKIDDED INTO DITCH. So the other Santa was the man from town; is that clear? Ah, isn't it wonderful that the neighbors, too, remembered Jane; even sent their Santa here ahead of ours. What an inspiration! What a coincidence!"

Santa Two was working fast, because the half-hour had almost run out. He yanked from his pack a huge doll some frilly and costly nighties a robe, pretty little slippers, and a big check signed *Santa Claus* and drawn on that bank in Santa Claus, Indiana. . . .

Now, get this straight. I am not a superstitious man. But, as I watched and listened to these goings-on, the weirdest chill ran up my spine. You know how you feel when you're in the presence of something you can't understand? Well, that's the way I felt. For, present for present, our Santa was

giving Jane the exact duplicates of each and every gift she had just received from the unknown stranger. The very lifelike doll, with its eyes that opened and shut and its two expressions—the great big smile and the sad, sad frown. The pink and white and lavendar nighties, trimmed with lace and ribbons. The lovely red slippers, the royal blue robe.

And the check. It was the exact duplicate of the other—down to the tiniest detail of color and design of the paper and the highly individual flourishes in the hand-inscribed signature. Remember, our check had been "made to order." No even remotely similar check had ever existed before.

Every gift was not only similar; it was identical. But that was impossible. Coincidence—or deliberate intention either—just couldn't stretch that far.

My gaze swiveled toward the resplendent tree in the corner of the living room. And I swear the short hears on the back of my neck rose . . .

I watched the rest of the show mechanically. It was completely disrupted; anything might happen. Jane was the most self-possessed of all; she just sat looking down quietly at all the lovely things Donovan had piled in her arms and saying gently, "Thank you, Mr. Santa Claus. But you should take back all these nice things and give them to some other little girl who needs them, because I don't need them now. The real Santa Claus just gave me the very same presents, not two minutes ago."

I liked the way she emphasized, "the *real* Santa Claus!"

JIM ALLEN'S majestic baritone was in there pitching too: "What a surprise! What a marvelous surprise! Two Santas instead of one; isn't that terrific? We've just been reliably informed that the first Santa was a local personage named Art Phelps and that his gifts represent the combined contributions of all the residents of this little village, young and old, rich and poor alike. It's wonderful, just wonderful."

Well, it was getting into the final minute, so Jim added hurriedly, "And now our time is running short, so I'll just signal everybody in the living room to join in singing *Hark, the Herald Angels Sing,* and we'll put on a record and just let's everybody sing along with it—in 20 million homes all over America and everywhere this program is being heard! All join in, everybody, and the happiest Merry Christmas to Jane and her family and to both Santas and to you all!"

So the engineer started the recording and everybody sang, and it was all very confused and loud and joyous and inspiring right up until the program went off the air. I never heard so much real happiness packed into the punch finish of a radio broadcast in my life.

But after it was over there were some things that needed explaining. The first Santa's gifts had disappeared, vanished completely, without leaving a trace. That's what had given me the shock as I'd looked over under the tree for them—they just weren't there anymore. We milled around that living room for awhile looking for them, but I think everybody knew in his heart then that they wouldn't be found. Then we went out on the porch and down into the driveway, where we clustered around the red truck.

"Holy Mother of Mercy!" Donovan whispered. "D'ya notice that there's only the tracks of my truck and my footprints—nobody else's?"

After a minute, his breath white in the bitter cold, Jim Allen asked querulously, "Well, you met this other guy on your way up here, didn't you Donovan?"

Donovan shook his head. "I met nobody. There wasn't a car on the road, all the way out."

"You had to pass him," Allen insisted doggedly. "There's no other road."

Donovan merely pointed to the road, with its blanket of fresh snow unbroken save for the marks of his truck.

No one spoke as we went back into the house. Jane was asleep in her wheelchair, a smile crinkling the corners of her mouth, the doll cradled in her chubby arms. She didn't awaken as her father wheeled her out into the hall, her mother trailing silently after. They both smiled wistful apology as they went out, and we nodded understandingly.

"Well," Jim Allen said grimly as the door closed behind them, "there's an awful lot about this broadcast we'll always have

to keep our traps shut about. I, for one, don't want to land in Bellevue psycopathic ward. Was it a hoax, or what?"

We were all surprised when the engineer spoke, for he was ordinarily such a silent man.

A saturnine, lean-jawed Scotsman with deep-sunk, brooding eyes, he was a type you'd know believed in nothing except the evidence of his own senses and the analysis of his own reason.

Yet this practiced man said quietly, "Somehow it reminds me of those visions of St. George, fighting at the head of phantom armies. Thousands of soldiers saw them because—through some sort of mass faith—they expected to see them. Something like that must have happened here tonight. Twenty million people including all of us here now—expected Santa Claus to come riding over that hill in a red truck at an exact split-minute. And so he came—the wish-fulfillment of all of us."

He paused reflectively, then went on. "It struck us as incredible that the presents were exactly like those Donovan brought later. But—didn't they have to be? Remember, we all knew just what presents Donovan would bring.

"And, of course, after Donovan arrived and we began to wonder the presents vanished. The spell was broken. Yet, who knows if they would not have remained real had we kept our faith?"

"Good grief!" Jim Allen exclaimed incredulously. "You believe that?"

The Scotsman looked him square in the eye. "I believe that," he said simply. "And I also believe that—if Jane ever again needs Santa enough, and has faith enough—the same Santa who was here tonight will come back to her—as real and true as anything that exists in the universe. You see, Allen, he was the real Santa Claus. He was a creation of the mind and of the spirit—the only reality there is, and the only attribute we have in common with God."

And that, I think, is the only satisfactory explanation we shall ever have of the other Santa . . .

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The Holiday

JOHN, I want you to go down to Kellogg's and get the lawn mower. They promised it'd be ready today.

John Madison sat on the screened porch and listened to his wife's voice shrilling from upstairs with part of his mind. The other half was busy as it had been much of late. This was the house they'd bought and only just finished paying for. White clapboard with red shutters and a peaked roof. A one-car garage that could become two. The auto inside was four years old, but whose wasn't these days? That was what Madison kept telling himself over and over to counteract the thought.

He had many of the things that were supposed to make men like himself happy. He had his own home, a wife and two children, a car, a steady job. . . .

John, didn't you hear me? It's nearly two-thirty! I want you to go down and get that lawn mower. The grass is beginning to look terrible. If we let it go today it'll be next Saturday before you'll pick it up!

"Yes, Mary," her husband replied listlessly but staying where he was on the screened porch in the blue semi-reclining chair.

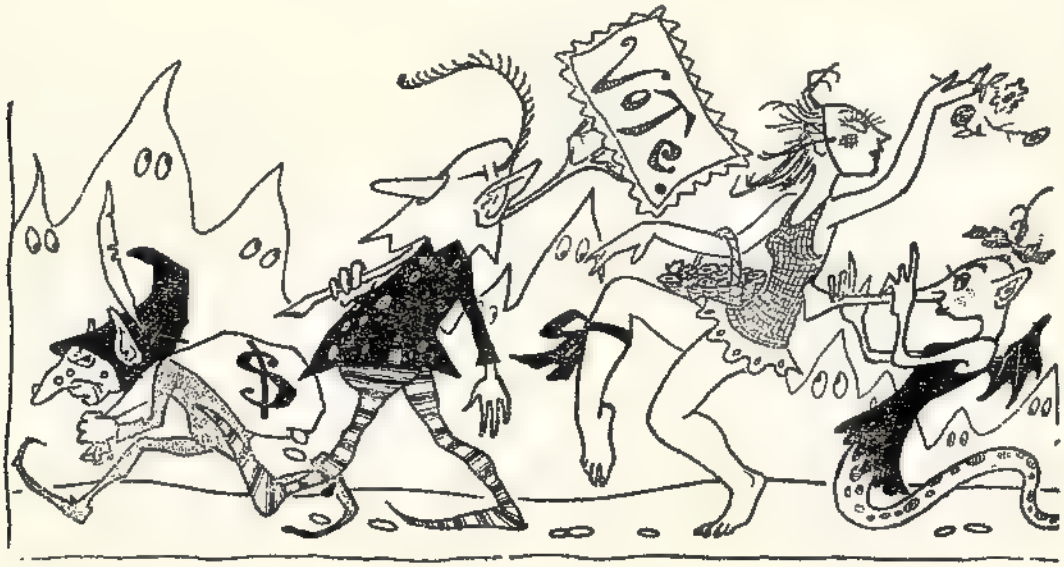
He pulled at the upholstery with his fingers and some of the ticking came away. That was symbolic. The stuff pulled apart if you gave it a good jerk. Or if you looked closely enough the way he was doing now, you could see that it would come apart. He got up slowly from the chair like a man after a long sickness. He opened the screen door of the porch and closed it gently behind him, mindful that Mary disliked the slam.

Madison walked languidly towards the gargage.

"Have you got enough money?" Her voice followed him, this time popping out of an upstairs window.

"Yes, dear."

THE garage was dark, and with the darkness, cooler. It was nice to sit behind the wheel for a moment without starting the engine. It was hot, hot even for early July, and the sun and the heat, he got to thinking, after a while seems to get into your brain and swell thoughts up there which ordinarily would be small. It was pleasant in here, Madison thought, and he wondered if he had the time if he couldn't take a nap.



By Allison V. Harding

He was cooler than he'd been all day, even after the iced tea at luncheon.

She came into his view all of a sudden, arms on her aproned hips, full of noise and energy although her thin frame and tired face belied it.

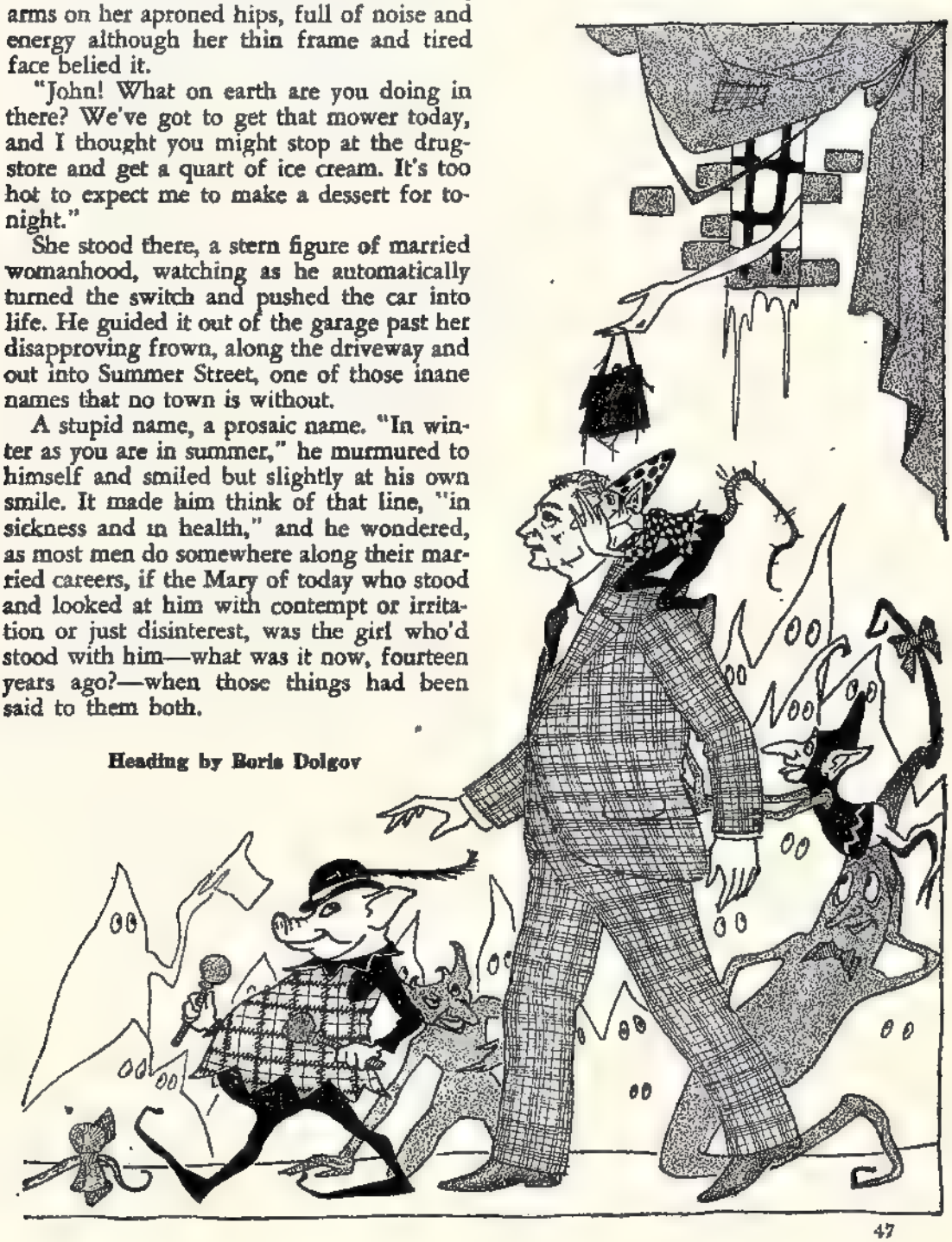
"John! What on earth are you doing in there? We've got to get that mower today, and I thought you might stop at the drugstore and get a quart of ice cream. It's too hot to expect me to make a dessert for tonight."

She stood there, a stern figure of married womanhood, watching as he automatically turned the switch and pushed the car into life. He guided it out of the garage past her disapproving frown, along the driveway and out into Summer Street, one of those inane names that no town is without.

A stupid name, a prosaic name. "In winter as you are in summer," he murmured to himself and smiled but slightly at his own smile. It made him think of that line, "in sickness and in health," and he wondered, as most men do somewhere along their married careers, if the Mary of today who stood and looked at him with contempt or irritation or just disinterest, was the girl who'd stood with him—what was it now, fourteen years ago?—when those things had been said to them both.

Heading by Boris Dolgov

If all *of life were a holiday, would we* really *enjoy it?*



Summer Street leads into Ivy Avenue, three right turn down onto Route 10. At twenty-five miles an hour, town was just fifteen minutes away; Kellogg's its two-storied heart.

Men in the last second before their extinction or death are ascribed the faculty of reviewing their lives. John Madison more than slightly suspected that his death or extinction was eons away, or perhaps in fact, he had died fourteen years ago. That was a milestone. He had married Mary, started payments on the house, gone to work for Stallings, and only a few months later had started payments on a car.

He drove as one does who is used to the wheel, without thinking, his thoughts free for this other business. It was the 8:17 in the morning every morning five days a week fifty-two weeks a year. No, there was that miserable two weeks' vacation in which there was just time to get to realize how much you need a vacation and then you have to go back to work again.

STALLINGS was a small-time ink jobber. His offices were in a midtown second-rate business building. Fourteen years ago John had had bright dreams of what he would do in the company. Now there were no dreams. Just his desk, which he was very used to, and his wooden chair which in time had become almost shaped to him. The paper work about shipments; orders and cancellations, re-orders, prices quoted so much per gallon, and Stallings, himself, a crag-faced, unimaginative individual who had a company named after himself because of some lucky breaks and money he'd chiseled off a wealthy wife.

Stallings, who paid his second-rate employees what he had to pay them and no more, and that grudgingly, and the dream of what you could become in the company was something handed out to each new employee as an apology that went with the low wages. "Sure, I know that it isn't much to start with but look at the opportunity you've got. . . ."

Stallings was middle-aged, fat (where his employees were thin), smug and unapproachable. Awfully unapproachable with a new idea or for a raise.

The 8.17 that took Madison to work and the 5:47 that took him home; the same gray-faced, middle-aged companions, the bridge-players, the cigar-smokers, the paper-folders. He was just one of the herd, one of the sheep, at the mercy of conductors, train-callers, engineers and schedule-makers.

Then Madison thought of his children. There was Boyd, his son, age 12 now, and Nancy, 10. It's only in the darkest corner of a man's mind, in his most intimate moments, that he looks at his children, those images of himself, and says, "My God!"

But Boyd and Nancy both terrified Madison and quieted his fears. They looked, from a safe distance, no different, no more astounding or unusual, better or worse, than millions of American children. Perhaps they weren't. It was just that he knew them so very well because they were his own.

Boyd was unreliable. Madison had just finished paying a sizeable settlement for his son's latest escapade, that of firing an air pistol through a neighbor's window and hitting someone in the temple with a pellet. Boyd did his lessons with cries of threatened doom and angry mutterings. He would not keep still when his father had a headache or had to work at home. He had even sneered when his father explained that, no, he wasn't with General MacArthur in the Pacific.

Boyd, to Madison's objective eye—and Madison had one even though he realized that such is unique with parents—was a mean, surly boy.

But was ten-year-old Nancy any better? Emphatically no! She had stringy hair and unfortunate features that the passing years did not improve. She was scarecrow thin, had chronic sniffles and coughing fits despite big bills to the doctor plus bottles and bottles of cod-liver oil that her mother bribed her to take. In addition, she was slovenly and untidy.

It was not that Madison wasn't fond of his children for he was, but they appalled him. And his only defense was to contemplate that beneath the shined-up and spick-and-span surface of his neighbors' children, they too had the souls of little devils. He was invariably pleased by the magazine articles that said so.

The Methodist Church steeple rose just ahead of him. The road took a curve

there and declined gradually to the stop-light by the lumber yard. Then it was straight-away down Main Street and turn left for Kellogg's. John coasted down the hill, just missed the end of the green and braked for the red, gazing idly across at the brightly painted sign proclaiming "Joe's Express Stop Service Station; Prop. Joe."

As he sat there suspended in time for the seconds it would take for the traffic signal to go yellow to green again, he noticed that the clock at the gas station said five to three. As the light changed, he drove into the service station. The gas gauge registered only a quarter full.

"Fill 'er up," he told the florid-faced proprietor who came out to wait on him.

They passed a few words about the weather but it was too hot even to talk about it long. John paid and drove out, noticing that the clock now stood squarely at three.

As he glided down Main Street, he saw on the sidewalk, in other cars the counterpart of his own, a familiar face here and there. It made him think of the bridge games and the dinner parties that were his lot. Those ordeals masquerading under the guise of pleasure. People like himself, like Mary, dressing up and being gay, pretending to have a good time and trying hard to show it. And all the time worrying underneath about everything, about money, about the job, about the wife, about the children—the country, politics, war. And on and on.

And then with Kellogg's only a block and a half away, Madison knew suddenly that he wasn't going to stop there. He wasn't going to pick up the lawn mower. He drove past and turned his head to look at the tan-fronted store with the red trimmings; the shiny bicycles, rakes, lawn sprayers and coiled brown garden hose in the windows.

He smiled and stepped a little harder on the gas. He caught the end of a green traffic light because he was going faster. And then in a minute more, he pushed out of the other side of town along the highway that led into the country. It was as simple as that. A split-second decision that meant merely that he did not take his right foot off the gas, put it on the brake and guide the sedan into the white-washed parking lanes beside Kellogg's,

Instead, he had gone on without stopping, and his reward was the most beautiful day he'd ever seen. He noticed it suddenly as though he'd been too busy before with his own thoughts. The sky was very blue and the sun very bright. He didn't mind the heat.

He put his arm out the window and felt the warm, baked paint of the outside door.

The roads were nearly empty, but Madison watched each passing car with a critical eye. He was pleased to see that everybody was careful. That was something of a fetish with him. He hated reckless, speeding drivers.

The fields he was passing now looked green and verdant, and the earth where it was laid bare was brown and rich. He noticed newly the way the fields were dissected neatly into squares by rude stone walls. But that was New England, of course, and he thought that after all, it was a nice place to be.

He took a couple of turns, letting his fancy and the car take him where they would. At any rate, this road he was on was a new one to him. He thought he knew most of the country hereabouts. But this was certainly unfamiliar. Up ahead over a long hill he could see the rotating vanes of a windmill. He came upon it a moment later, a fine yellow cupolad building with its turning arms picking up the sun's rays and holding them in mid-air.

Then suddenly there were woods with a pleasant coolness and the sound of birds. Just ahead he saw a brook, and by its side two overalled barefooted youngsters fishing. He stopped the car and ambled over to them.

"Any luck?" he asked.

"Some," one of the boys answered, pulling his line out and rebaiting it. "Here, Mister. Try your own luck."

"Well, now, really. . . ."

"Aw, go ahead!"

"Thanks, son." He cast the line clumsily, but it flew out and fell with a plop into mid-stream. It seemed barely to have settled to the bottom when he felt a tug and then a series of sharp ones. He pulled in, the boys whooping at his side, and found he'd hooked a good-sized trout,

"Say, whattaya know!" whistled one of the youngsters. "That's a fine fish, Mister!"

"Here, he's yours!"

"Naw, don't be silly."

Madison insisted, flushed with pleasure at his catch. "It's your line and bait. I want you fellows to have it. Anyway, my wife's not so fond of fish."

He leaned forward confidingly. They laughed, and it was evident they thought he was a splendid fellow. Madison went back to the car and started up, leaving them with a wave of his hand. Those were the sort of things a man should do more often. He found he was tingling pleasantly at the experience.

HE LOOKED at his watch. It was after four. Now he'd have to be getting back. He must have come further than he'd thought. There was still the lawn mower to pick up, and Kellogg's closed at five-thirty. He found a crossroads and a lettered sign pointing the way he wanted. He ate up the miles, pushing the little sedan faster than it was accustomed to go.

Soon the roads were familiar again and he was approaching the outskirts of town. He found Kellogg's, parked across the way and went in. Mr. Kellogg himself bobbed his head and brought the machine out. It looked shiny.

"Good as new," said the proprietor.

They'd had new cutting blades put in. Madison paid and picked up the mower. He crossed and put it in the back seat. He hoped Mary wouldn't expect him to do much grass-cutting today. It was that hot. But then he expected she'd not let him off.

He drove back up Main Street, and a couple of friends hailed him, waving and grinning at him as he went by. Not such a bad little town after all, he thought. Maybe it's the way you look at it. Or maybe it's the way your liver it working, according to the ads.

He drove back on Route 10, along Ivy and into Summer Street, turned into his driveway. He was taking the lawn mower out of the back of the sedan when he heard Mary coming, and at the same time, he remembered.

He turned around, "Oh dear, I'm sorry! I forgot the ice cream!"

But she just came up to him and kissed him on the cheek. "Don't be silly, John. It doesn't matter. I'll make some sort of pudding. Doesn't the lawn mower look fine!"

"Yes," he said wondering vaguely why Mary looked happy. Because her face did have a radiance that he remembered from years ago.

He was hoping nobody would say anything about mowing the lawn that day. Boyd came around the corner of the house. He had on a baseball cap. He was wearing a fielder's mitt and pounding a ball into its pocket. Boyd looked at his parents and then at the lawn mower.

"Say, look at her sparkle!"

"Mary, I can just as well drive back into town and get that ice cream."

"Nonsense! I wouldn't hear of it. I don't mind making something, dear."

"Pop," said Boyd who'd been inspecting the repaired machine on his haunches, "she looks so good, I'll mow the lawn."

His father showed enough surprise to warrant Boyd's continuing. "It'll be kind of in payment for this mitt you gave me. All the fellas down at the field today were jealous."

That's right, he had given Boyd the glove a few weeks back, John recalled. His son started off with surprising energy, cutting great swaths into the front lawn with the machine.

"Well!" breathed Madison as he realized his son wasn't tiring of the fun after two cropped lanes had been done but meant to continue. "Well!"

He went inside and found his paper, this time miraculously not torn or turned to the comics. Nancy was the worst offender in this respect.

"Where is she?" he asked Mary mildly.

"Upstairs studying. You know, the little darling came to me this afternoon and said she was way behind on her summer reading and thought she ought to start. Isn't that cute?"

Madison unfolded his paper. The headlines said "Experts See War Impossible In Our Time." His eye took in the other columns. Here was an article that predicted a leveling-off of price rises, and another that promised a bright future for the ink indus-

try. That ought to help him, Madison filed away.

SUPPER was a serene and harmonious meal. The chops were done to a golden turn, the salad-dressing perfect, and the pudding Mary made for dessert turned out just right. He noticed with pleasure that for once Boyd and Nancy didn't make faces at each other or spit portions of their food out disgustedly.

He wondered if Mary noticed the new peacefulness of the family but he didn't put his question into words. Her face was contented and she looked somehow younger, so he reasoned she must be appreciating the way things were as much as he was.

As he lay upstairs the next night in their papered bedroom, Mary beside him in the other twin bed, listening to the wind blowing gently so that he could hear an occational leaf against the eaves or the faint sound of the screens in the windows, he wondered briefly at the change. And then in the darkness there came a kind of vision. The re-enactment of a scene that he would rather forget but that was so familiar that it superseded the soft dark reality of his true environment.

He saw Mary. Her face was thin and haggard, as he'd seen it in the past so many times, her hair uncurled and stringy, her expression puzzled and pleading and irritated. She was talking to him, going on in her dry, flat tones that took to whining so easily. She was talking about Nancy's sniffles and Boyd's destructiveness, and the other problems. She went on and on until finally to make the image go away, Madison sat bolt upright in bed. Then it was gone and he was alone in the darkness.

He went to sleep finally with considerable reservation in his mind as to what the morrow would bring.

The next day his breakfast was ready on time. The toast was honey-colored instead of burnt, the coffee hot. The children were relatively quiet, and when he got the car out to drive down to the 8:17 with Mary coming along to bring the sedan home, Nancy even jumped up, threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. "I love you, Daddy!"

For once he was at the station in plenty of time thanks to Mary's promptness in leaving the dishes and coming with him. She kissed him goodby, didn't ask him for money and waited till the train came into the station, waving at him as he went up the steps.

He got onto the usual car and sat down on the shady side. Several of the other men nodded to him. Then he unfolded his paper and began to read. The train jogged out of the station and started on its way to the city.

LIFE becomes a habit. Whatever we do and however we live it. Whether it is tortuous or happy, the tortuousness or the happiness becomes habit so that we rarely realize till we look back, how much we have suffered or how much we have enjoyed. It had been that way with Madison through the latter years of his marriage. The drudgery and drabness of those years. Yet, after a while the disharmony, the frustration, the hopelessness, became such a part of the everyday routine that they were just that—routine. He came to expect no more out of himself, out of his circumstances and out of life.

Now this strange change had come. He knew not why or how, but it was here. And after a while, man being what he is, Madison found himself accepting this new way of things. Just as the screams of his fighting children, the whines and shrill criticisms of his wife had become commonplace, the curt responses of his fellow workers and commuters and the occasional gruff condescensions of his boss, so now did this new lavish life that had dawned for him become a commonplace for John Madison. It was as though he was the personification of the man in the ad who clips a coupon or takes a course or reads a book or does that one thing that suddenly catapults him out of his rut and over the shoulders and heads of his fellow men to all things wonderful.

But success is always more wonderful when it is looked forward to. When it becomes a reality, man's eyes are always turned ahead to new conquests. So it was with John Madison. Within a few weeks, Mr. Stallings, his boss had called him into the plush, furnished office and said—it went something like this:

"Madison, I've been watching you for a long time. Yes, years, you might say. I like your work. I like what you've done, the way you've stuck with us. Effective the first of next month you will become the Assistant Director of the Stallings Ink Company. Yes, I'm creating that position. Your salary will be doubled as a starter."

It happened like that. Then on the 8:17 or the 5:47 men who'd never spoken to Madison before, men who'd he'd viewed from his little corner of sub-mediocrity in the railroad car as the unreachables, the Big Wheels, they began to notice him and talk to him. One who'd ridden the same route for years, a Mr. Jennings, Vice President of the First National Bank, came to him one day to ask his *advice*. It was, perhaps, a trivial matter about some institutional advertising that the bank was considering, and what did Madison think? But John swelled up with his new attention, and his buddy-commuters looked at him with envy and appreciation as Jennings, the great man, noted the words of wisdom from their bridge "fourth."

NOT that John Madison was not appreciative of the rosy turn in his affairs. He was, but he had come to take them very much for granted, and life became something of a dream, interrupted only occasionally by those visions. Perhaps memories, you will call them, of the past. They always took the same form. He would be sitting or lying on a bed and his wife would be before him, her thin hands holding a worn purse.

It was a year ago she'd had that black, gold-edged purse. He'd bought her two new ones since then, or was it three? But in this fantasy, she would be clutching it, holding it with her yellow-white worn fingers, and her face was always strained and worried and unhappy. And even when he couldn't hear the words, he could see her mouth working. The thin lips moving apart, coming together again, moving apart, coming together again, over and over like the mouth of a hungry predatory ogress.

He wondered why the dream should come to him so persistently, but everything else was far too good in his life for John Madison to consider seeking advice on it. People who had dreams and images were schoolgirls, frustrated wives and failure-businessmen. *He*, certainly, was not going to waste time on these couch-crazy psychiatrists. Besides, everything he touched seemed to go right.

With his increase in salary, John made a few investments. They turned out spectacularly well and with this money he added to his house, increased the one-car garage to two and bought a convertible. His rising stature in the community called for rising responsibilities. He was appointed a trustee of the local bank and served with such success as head of the Community Chest that he was made head of the town Planning Commission.

Stallings upped his salary again, and Stallings also grew old very, very rapidly. It was not many months more before Madison bought his former boss out. The organization was now Madison Company.

By now, the sedan had given way to a limousine. The house in the little development was outgrown. Boyd was sent to prep school, and a bigger mansion up on The Hill, the most fashionable section of town, was purchased.

Madison Company began to enlarge. Its salesmen, under the personal direction of John himself, wrested away some immensely important accounts from more-established competitors. Business boomed. John no longer took the 8:17 and the 5:47. He went in at 9:45 and came back later. He'd joined a club and dined there with wealthy associates, people who could "do things for him."

One of these interested Madison in politics, and soon he was contributing heavily to various favorite sons. His opinion was sought on many matters and by many persons. The Madisons bought a city house in addition to their ever-expanding country estate. The town house had paintings by Rembrandt and Picasso. It had two maids and it rang to the merry sounds of more-than-occasional dinner parties.

Madison himself was mellow, self-assured. Mary Madison, expensively dressed, her face younger now with leisure, better food and nothing to worry about, was an impeccable hostess. People liked to come to the dinner parties. But still and all, John Madison had the recurring dream.

IT WAS strange in its vividness, and although now he had both the time and the money to spend on any degree of psychiatric treatment and advice, he somehow shied away from that step. He was in the true meaning of the word, a self-made man. He was where he was because of his own efforts. He was not going to give in to some strange brain image or dream that he had from time to time.

Funny, but it was always of Mary, Mary as she used to be. More than the bag, he could identify the dress. It was a black one, short with the old style, shapeless and with the look of having been washed too many times and perhaps patched here and there. Even in this dream it was an insult to him that Mary should look so badly and dress so poorly. And her face haunted him, its worried, agonized lines, the sound of her voice shrilling at him. Nancy's sniffles, Boyd's latest escapades, like the sound of a fingernail scratched down a blackboard.

These dreams, Madison began to notice, after years of noticing them, trying to deny them, trying to ignore them and still noticing them, came, it seemed, almost precisely at four-week intervals, say once a month. The regularity of these attacks, if that's what they were, interested and intrigued Madison. He had read of the rhythmical up-and-down periods of a person's mental and nervous life and he supposed this was the case with himself.

But there was too much else going on to be too greatly preoccupied with the matter. It was something that came and went, and although it annoyed him, it nevertheless, always passed. It seemed to have no deep significance or ominousness.

It was in the fall that the rotund, graying man with the long cigar and the bright red beaming face made the suggestion that was to shape John Madison's final and ultimate destiny.

"John," he said over after-dinner coffee, his wife and Mary Madison having withdrawn to Mary's sitting room, "have you ever thought about politics . . . about going into them yourself?"

His questioner was Hubert Carroll, chairman of one of the state's most powerful political machines. Madison felt startled, but he was an old enough hand not to show it. In a few seconds that he took to weigh the question, its appeal grew.

"Why, no, frankly I haven't, Hubert. I've always been satisfied to throw a few quarters into the coffers to let men of far better political sense than I, like yourself, for instance, guide the helm of government."

"I think you'd be a great vote-getter, John," Carroll went on. "There are others in the state who think so, too. We've been wondering if you'd consider making the race for senator next year."

THAT was how it happened. A casual question over demitasse cups in the library of Madison's city house. The months passed and the idea grew. The summer came, and Madison received his party's nomination for junior senator from the state. The campaign was a whirlwind affair with Mary and Hubert Carroll always at his side. The two children were away now at boarding school.

Madison made speeches on street corners. He toured the rural areas and admired farmers' Wyandottes and Jerseys. He went to factories and talked to men running lathes. He glad-handed grease-monkies in garages. He was all Hubert Carroll had predicted, a great vote-getter.

The day before election, he told Mary modestly that he hoped he'd make a good showing, but he didn't expect to be elected over his veteran, ringwise opponent. In his heart, Madison knew things were running his way, and the election itself confirmed his hunch. He was swept into office by an overwhelming plurality. And as he stood at campaign headquarters, his arm around Mary, he knew that he was on his way and that the path could lead anywhere, to the very top.

Madison put in six good years as a senator. Each year was one of hard work and of unspectacular but conscious achievement. His years were spoiled annually on twelve regular occasions, and he came to accept these with much the same attitude that a man views his damp-weather rheumatism. "What cannot be cured must be endured."

It was a strict rule of his that he would never discuss business with Mary, whether it concerned Madison Company or his days in Washington as a senator. But there were

times when he had the almost overwhelming urge to take her aside and tell her about these persistent imaginings of his. It mattered not whether he was sleeping or awake. The fantasy would come always the same. Mary looking always the same. Telling the same things about Nancy and Boyd who never, like Mary's face and the timbre of her voice, ever seemed to change but remained children with children's problems, as Mary remained middle-aged old.

John wished this thing would stop bothering him, stop nagging at him. He was too busy. There was too much to do, too much to think about without a moment to be spared.

It was a surprise to him when he was appointed chairman of the National Economies Board. This took him into other states and gave him a view of the country which, as a clerk long ago in the Stallings Ink Company, he never would have dreamed would ever be his lot. He made friends in other states as he had in his own. And even as he was looking forward to the end of his six-year term as senator, with the possibilities that would then insure a rest and a chance of thinking his way out of these perplexing and distressing dreams that were getting on his nerves more, he saw the new look in Hubert Carroll's face. Carroll had been his campaign manager and had stayed on as his advisor.

It was at the Continental Club in Washington that Hubert broached the subject.

"John," he said. "Would it come to you as a surprise if I told you that the party is considering you among its possibilities as presidential nominee?"

Madison was frightened and immensely pleased and stimulated all at the same time. No man ever looks the other way when a presidential nomination is offered. Not honestly and sincerely. Something deep inside of him stirred his thinking, he recognized. It had happened first in the new harmony in his home years ago. A new harmony that he recognized and accepted as being a necessary part of his evolution.

He had noticed the same stirrings when Stallings had called him in and promoted him, when he had bought Stallings out, when his investments had all gone so well, and when he'd been approached to make the run as senator. Always there was this something inside of him that nodded and said, "Yes, of course!"

And now, in spite of a certain superficial awe at the suggestion put to him by Hubert Carroll, he felt immensely pleased, and that insatiable hunger inside of him was feasting on the prospect. After things had begun to go better at home years ago, Madison still remembered that he'd sat at his humble desk at Stallings Ink Company and he *knew, knew,* mind you, even before the old man called him in and gave him that promotion and raise.

IT WAS a joke, of course, but underneath was a hard core of truth. And when he'd become the assistant director, there'd been another time when he'd been with some cronies at the club and somebody'd said, "Madison Company. Sounds good. Some day you'll buy him out, John."

So it was before his senatorial career. He was always running into people who'd say, "You've got a way with you, John. You know how to handle people. You've got what it takes, man! Why aren't you in politics?"

And during his senatorial career, people around the country, this state and that, here in a hamlet, there in a village, "You're presidential timber, John Madison."

Presidential timber! Mary was "so thrilled" at the prospect. There was a mad round of conferences with party leaders, picture taking—poses, fishing, poses at the orphans' home, poses at the ball park and outside the Senate. Some experienced politicians sneered as the name of John Madison was mentioned more and more often.

But by the time the party's convention rolled around in mid-summer, Madison and Carroll had done their work well. That was the year that General Evans came to the convention with supposedly "the nomination in his pocket." Evans and a couple of Favorite Sons fought it out on the first few ballots. They were indecisive. Then Madison, a "nobody," began to come to the fore, picking up strength as the later votings were tabulated. On the sixth Madison was splitting Favorite Sons' and the General's support down the middle. On the seventh ballot, the inevitable behind-the-

scenes deal being made, John Madison was nominated.

The countryside tours started then. The speeches in crowded auditoriums, in big cities, from coast to coast, the carefully prepared speeches that said very little but sounded good. The climax in the state auditorium before twenty-three thousand cheering people. And then the waiting-around until tomorrow and the election.

But Madison knew, although he spoke of it to no one, as he went to bed Election Eve what the result would be. Through the years this intuitive sense had done well by him. Logically, it was putting the cart before the horse, but Madison had almost come to think that what he believed in strongly enough would therefore become so. It was a pleasant thought and, if he was right, a most pleasant acquisition to have among one's faculties.

He knew, though, that these flashes did not come only to him. There was the man, a dissenter, who had stood up one time at a rally when he'd been just Senator John Madison with no other aspirations the man who'd pointed at him, half-angry, half-excited, half-humorous, and said in expostulation, "Next you'll be thinking you're the *President!*"

And so it was. That was the die cast of his whole career. The thought, the wish, became the reality. Two days later it was a confirmed fact. John Madison had been elected President by the greatest majority in sixteen years.

The days and months tumbled by. There was the inaugural on the inevitable rainy Washington day, his speech to the country well-received, moving into the White House —all rather like something in a dream. The huge retinue of people that were his lot now, from servitors to advisors on all levels.

And the years tumbled by, one after another. Years of speech-making and policy making and politics-playing. Somehow John managed to get himself through. There always seemed to be luck on his side. Whenever he was in a tight spot, he but wished himself out of it and he was.

THE only thing now in his life he regretted were the dreams. The only times when he was truly unhappy were during them. To be sure, Mary was gray-haired. Her once-straight figure not quite as straight. But her face, in reality, was full. bright, her eyes soft with satisfaction, her mouth full and content. Not this . . . this thin-lipped, haggard-faced wraith from the past that haunted him month in and year out.

But as he had found it in times past, his life was now too full to take time out to contemplate this cross he carried. It was, he rationalized, a small cross in size and weight compared to what most men carry across the miles of their lifetimes. He was a man who had a recurring imagery. It was unpleasant. It shocked him anew each time, as though he had not had it before hundreds of times. But it was no more than that, he kept telling himself. Obviously it did not impair his efficiency because here he was. John Madison, President of the United States of America.

Soon, almost frighteningly, soon it was time for another election, and over his half-hearted really insincere protests, his party demanded that he run again, and of course as he knew it would be beforehand, Madison was re-elected.

Time tumbled over itself now seeming to run away, and again before he knew it, he stood before the electorate of his country, and again Hubert Carroll nodded his head and said, "I think you have a good chance of re-election." And Madison knew inside it wasn't a good chance—it was a cinch and in the bag.

Overnight and through another Election Day—no longer a twenty-four hours of exquisite tenseness as years ago when he'd first run for Senator—and his third term was a reality. It was perhaps Madison's supreme luck that the affairs of his country required no brain and no ability bigger than his. The world had been relatively untroubled during these twelve years, and the Ship of State steered a straight and serene course.

It was inevitable, Madison having become a household word from the youngest child to the oldest whitebeard, that pressure be brought to bear on him to run a fourth time. He had firmly decided after his third term started, and had so expressed his views to his personal friends, and on occasion to

the public, that there would be no fourth term. He would retire to private life.

But he knew now that his body and his mind, his blood vessels and his brain, were attuned to this life, that the power of his position was an ingredient, a substance, a fluid that flowed through him, that he needed in him to keep living. He did run for a fourth term and—of course—he was elected.

But this was no such completely untroubled era for John Madison as his first three four-year terms had been. There were mutterings that rose even to his ears. The dream-visits that a haggard Mary paid to him still were at one-month intervals. But they seemed more frightening, more vivid than ever. Madison, for the first time since many years ago, was slightly less than exuberantly happy. He was, his doctor told him, muchly overworked, greatly in need of a prolonged vacation.

He eased up as best he could. He delegated much of his work, cut down on speaking, commitments. But a President has obligations. At one local rally that he was obliged to attend and deliver a speech, a dissenter rose up in the balcony, loud, strident.

For a moment the smoke-filled auditorium whirled. All that existed was the voice and this remained fixed in time and space. The voice coming out of the splinter-thin calm stretched towards the podium on which Madison stood delivering his address, stretched forth in a little oasis of silence between his own sentences so that John caught and heard every word:

"President, not for two terms or three, but four—who do you think you are, G - -"

He got that much out before the guards subdued him and dragged him away.

Madison finished the rest of his speech with difficulty. A cold clammy sweat oozed out and sat roundly on his forehead. His ears were roaring. The auditorium grew dimmer and dimmer before his eyes. The last thing he remembered were hands helping him from the speaker's platform.

IT SEEMED a long time, a long procession of one-a-month visits she'd been coming up here to see him. She'd never forgive herself perhaps for the purely incidental fact that she had not been, strictly, the last person to see him as John Madison before he became just a number on a corridor.

It was Joe, of Joe's Service Station, who'd last spoken to him that day so long ago. Joe who made change for the bill Madison offered to pay him for gas. It was Joe who'd testified "He *seemed* all right. Looked a little worried, but who doesn't these days!"

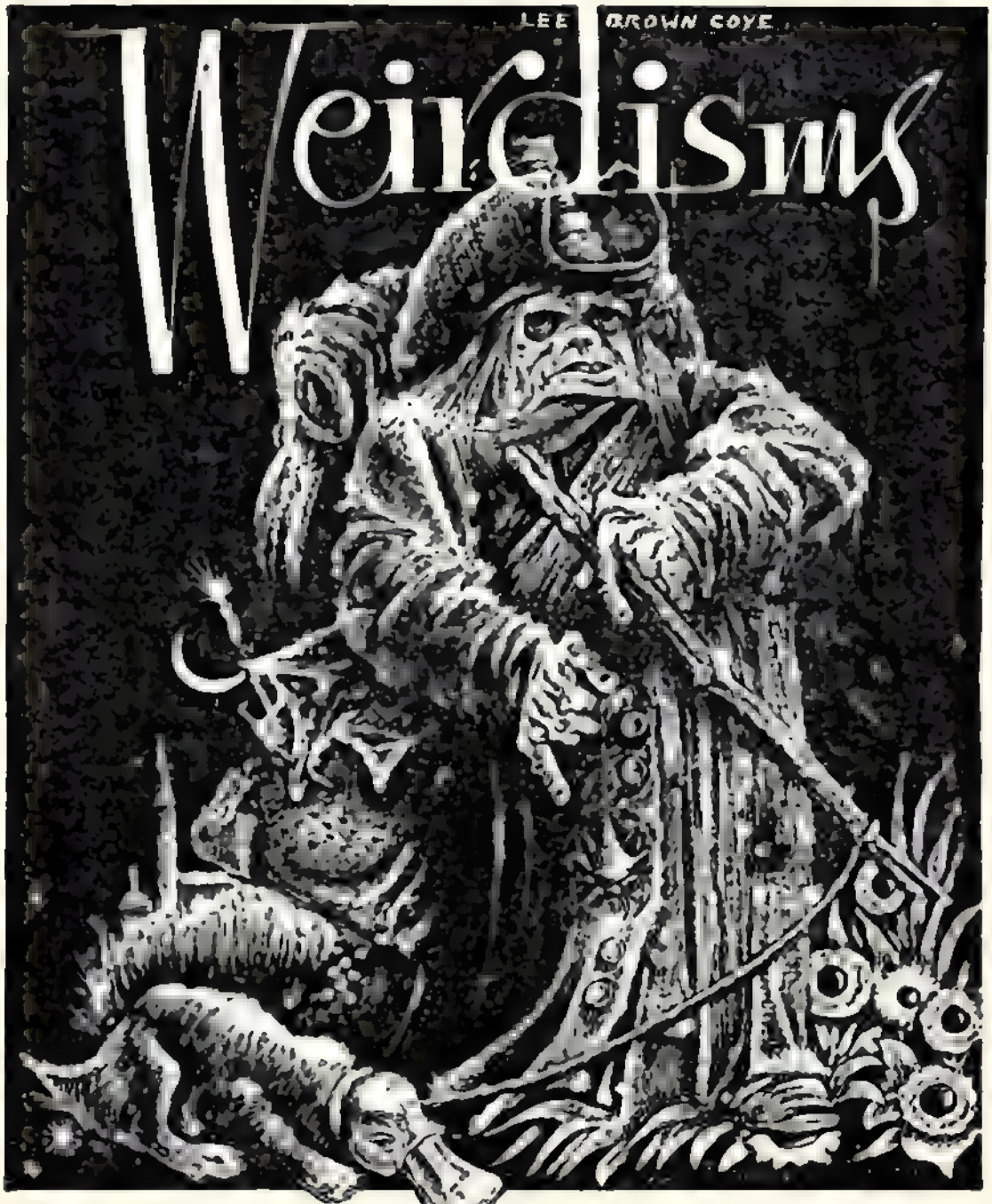
And that was the end. Madison had driven out of the service station . . . and over the invisible line.

They told her it was good to come. They said, "You may not think so, but *we* know." And so she came and sat in the small room and talked to him regularly once a month, tried to think of things to say although of course he didn't understand a word of it. But she talked on without noticing, about Nancy and Boyd. They said, "Talk as you would *ordinarily*. About the family and yourself."

She didn't say, though, how low the money was running. And that was the only part of it that made her glad he didn't notice things. Well, things like her worn black dress and the old frayed purse. She'd leave the room in defeat, more hopeless and sad and tired than before, and the institution doctors, if they had time, would pat her perfunctorily and say, "You know, Missus Madison, the only time he seems at all *normal* are these periods when you come once a month, so do try to keep on. Perhaps—who knows!"

But after she went and Madison began his writhings and mouthings and droolings again, the professional, superficial hope vanished from the halls as it does, and particularly from his small, barred room in the institution. And an orderly, new to the floor, set a tray with tin, rounded, harmless utensils on it in the room, staring unbelievingly at the figure on the bed, listening to the words that foamed out, and then skittered into the hall to cross himself and murmur to a passing confrere with a backward and distasteful jerk of his thumb at the room he'd just left:

"Another one who thinks he's *God!*"



TO ACCOMPLISH THE EVIL DESIGNS OF THEIR MASTER, THE DEVIL, IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT WIZARDS MINGLE WITH PEOPLE. THUS WE FIND THEM IN THE ROLE OF MEDICINE MEN. THEY JOURNEYED OVER THE COUNTRY-SIDE LADEN WITH THE TRAPS OF THEIR TRADE - A KNAPSACK HUNG ON THEIR BACK & A POUCH AT THEIR SIDE. HEREIN THEY CARRIED CHARMS, HEX-SIGNS & HERBS & NOT INFREQUENTLY, NEEDLES, THREAD, PRETTYS & SUNDRY OTHER NOTIONS TO TEMPT THE PUBLIC. IN SPITE OF THEIR DEBASED CHARACTER WIZARDS HELD A CERTAIN CHARM ABOUT THEIR PERSONALITY WHICH LET THEM INTO THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PEOPLE THEY SET OUT TO BEWITCH.

The Testament of Claiborne Boyd

By August Derleth

(The manuscript of Claiborne Boyd, now in the vaults of the library of the University of Buenos Aires, is in three parts. The first two parts were discovered among the effects of Claiborne Boyd left behind in a hotel room in Lima, Peru; the final portion is a piecing together of various letters—delivered to Professor Vibarro Andros of Lima—and of related accounts. The entire manuscript has been released for limited publication only after prolonged discussion among its custodians.)

I

IT IS singularly fortunate that the ability of the human mind to correlate and assimilate facts is limited in relation to the potential knowledge of the universe even as we know it—to say nothing of what lies beyond. Fortunate because the earth's teeming millions, save but for an infinitesimal number, live on blissfully unaware of the dark depths of horror which yawn eternally not only in strange, out-of-the-way places of the world, but often just beyond the sunset or around the next corner—the yawning chasms in time and space, and the inconceivably alien things which occupy those terrible lacunae.

Less than a year ago I was engaged upon a leisurely study of Creole culture, residing in New Orleans and making occasional trips from that city into the bayou country of the Mississippi Delta region, which was not far from the town of my birth. I had been following this pursuit for perhaps three months when word reached me of the death of my great-uncle Asaph Gilman, and of the shipment—at his express direction as contained in his will—of certain of his property to me, as "the only student" remaining among his few living relatives.

My great-uncle had been for many years Professor of Nuclear Physics at Harvard, and, following his retirement because of age from that university, he had taught briefly at Miskatonic University in Arknam. From this last post he retired to his home in a suburb of Boston and began to live out his last years in an almost reclusive fashion; I write "almost," because he broke his seclusion from time to time to make strange, secretive trips into all corners of the world, on one of which—while poking about certain unsavory districts of Limehouse, in London—he had met his death—a sudden riot of what appeared to be lascars or dacoits from ships in dock involving him and dissipating as suddenly as it had begun, leaving him dead.

I had had occasional communications from him, written in a spidery hand and dispatched from various points at which he had touched—from Nome, Alaska, for instance, and Ponape in the Carolines, from Singapore, Cairo, Cregoivacar in Transylvania, Vienna, and many more places. At the beginning of my research into Creole backgrounds, I had received a cryptic postcard sent from Paris, bearing on its face a fine etching of the Bibliotheque Nationale, and on the reverse a directive from Great-uncle Asaph: "If you come upon any evidence of pagan worship *past or present,* in your study, I would be obliged if you would collect all data and send it along to me at your earliest convenience." Since, of course, the Creoles among whom I studied were largely Roman Catholic in religion, I encountered no such data as he sought; so I did not write to the address in London he gave. Indeed, before I had planned to write to him at all, word of his untimely death reached me.

MY GREAT-UNCLE'S effects followed notice of his death a fortnight later—two steamer trunks filled to capacity, if their weight were any indication. At the time of their arrival I was busy assimilating primary facts about customs and folklore of the Creole country, and for that reason it was well over a month before I thought to open the trunks and make at least a cursory ex-

Strange and terrible words from beyond the snug walls of every-day.

Heading by Lee Brown Coye

amination of their contents. When I did finally open them, I discovered that their contents could be divided readily into two parts—a collection of extremely curious "pieces" which would have been the delight of any collector of aboriginal art, and a sheaf of notes, some typewritten, some in my great-uncle's spidery script, some merely clippings and letters.

Obviously because the aboriginal art lent itself most readily to scrutiny, I gave some time to it immediately. After perhaps four hours spent in an effort at some arrangement, I came to the conclusion that the pieces my great-uncle had so painstakingly collected represented a strange kind of creative progression. My own knowledge of such aboriginal art was comparatively limited, but my great-uncle had attached adequate notes to the bottoms or backs of most of the pieces, save the patently self-explanatory ones, such as the common types of Polynesian masks, for instance.

The division of the pieces into groups was in itself interesting. There were approximately two hundred and seventy-seven of them, making allowance for two or three which might have broken in such a way as to resemble two pieces rather than one. Of this number, probably a quarter of a hundred were of American Indian origin, and a like number of Canadian Indian and Eskimo origin. There were a few scattered pieces which were clearly of Mayan design, and there were a score of Egyptian craftsmanship. Approximately a hundred pieces came out of the African heartland, and two-score or so from Oriental sources. Almost all the remainder—and therefore the majority from any one source—were South Pacific in origin, from Polynesia, Micronesia, Melanesia, and Australia. Apart from these, there were perhaps half a dozen pieces, the origin of which was admittedly unknown. These pieces were all extremely unusual, and, though differing widely in a superficial fashion from one another, there seemed to be connecting links between them, as if some obscure development had occurred in common in all the racial and culture patterns represented, such links as suggested certain basic similarities between the hideous carvings of the South Pacific and the repellent totems of the Canadian Indians, for instance; and of this odd relationship, my great-uncle had certainly been aware, as his notes indicated. But, disappointingly, there was nowhere any clear indication of the underlying thesis of my great-uncle's research in so far as these curious art works were concerned.

My great-uncle had clearly lavished most of his care upon the South Pacific pieces, which were not, I saw at a glance, the customary mask-varieties, though his notes were not in themselves too expository, and it was only in the light of later events that some clarification of the "art" and of his appended notes occurred to me. Among the South Pacific pieces were several which caught my eye at once. In the order of their impingement upon my awareness, they were as follows, with appended notes:

(1) A human figure surmounted by a bird. "Sepik River, New Guinea. Reverse said to exist, but great secrecy attending. Uncollected."

(2) A piece of Tapa cloth from the Tonga Islands, the design a dark green star upon a brown background. "First occurrence of the five-pointed star in this area. No other relation. Natives unable to account for design; say it is very old. Evidently no contact here, since it has lost meaning."

(3) Fisherman's God. "Cook Islands. *Not* the familiar fishing canoe effigy. Note lack of neck, misshapen torso, tentacles for legs and/or arms. No name given by natives."

(4) Stone *tiki*. "Marquesas. Exciting *batrachian* head of figure presumably man. Are fingers webbed? Natives, while not worshiping it, endow it with meaning, apparently fear association."

(5) Diminutive head. "Clearly a miniature of colossal stone images found on the outer slope of Rano-raraku. Typical Easter Island work. Found in Ponape. Natives call it simply 'Elder God'."

(6) Carved lintel. "New Zealand Maori. Exquisite workmanship. Central figure obviously octopoid, yet not an octopus, but a curious combination of fish, frog, octopus, and man."

(7) Carved door jamb *(talé)*. "New Caledonia. Note suggestion of five-pointed star *again!*"

(8) Ancestral figure. "Carved in tree fern. Ambrym, New Hebrides. Partly human, partly batrachian. If representation of true ancestor, some manifest relation to same cult as that of Ponape and Innsmouth. Mention of Cthulhu to owner frightened him; he seemed not to know why."

(9) Bearded mask. "Ambrym origin. Exciting suggestion of *tentacles, not hair,* as 'beard'. Similar use in Carolines, Sepik River country of New Guinea, and Marquesas. One such in shop in dock area of Singapore. *Not for sale!*"

(10) Wooden figure. "Sepik River. Nootice (a) nose—a single tentacle curling down and into figure below waist; (b) lower jaw—another tentacle curling down, rejoining torso at umbilicus. Head grotesquely out of proportion. Living model?"

(11) War-shield. "Queensland. Maze design. Apparently (a) maze under water; (b) squat, anthropoid figure suggested at end of maze. Tentacles?"

(12) Shell pendant. "Papua. Similar to above."

IT SEEMED manifest that my great-uncle sought some very definite tendencies in these pieces, but whether of the development of primitive art or of some object of representation was not clear. Presumably, however, it was the latter, for among the remaining pieces of unknown origin there were two which were extremely suggestive in the light of my great-uncle's cryptic notes. One was of a rough, five-pointed star, made from some manner of gray stone unfamiliar to me; the other was an exquisitely made figure just over seven inches in height, representing nothing so much as the figment of a nightmare. It represented, certainly, some ancient monster, if anything even remotely resembling it had ever walked the earth. The creature was suggestively anthropoid in outline, but its head was octopoid, and its face was a mass of feelers resembling tentacles, while its body appeared to be at one and the same time scaly and rubbery looking. Its hind and fore feet had disproportionately large claws, and something which resembled bat-wings appeared to grow from its back. Because it was corpulent, and its face of a horrible malignance, the squatting figure had about it an unavoidable force—a vivid, unforgettable impression of great evil—not evil as it is commonly understood, but a terrible, soul-destroying horror transcending evil as mere men can know it. Its aspect was perhaps all the more fearful because the cephalopod head was bent forward, and the aspect of the squatting figure was that of a creature about to rise, as it were, to pounce forward. To its base, my great-uncle had pasted but one brief note, more puzzling than the others. It read only, "C.?—or some other?" Though my knowledge of such primitive art was, as I have admitted, comparatively slight, I was convinced that there was no link between the art of this strange figure and the known types of art with which I had the familiarity of any reasonably well-educated individual, and this conviction served to make my great-uncle's acquisition seem all the more mysterious.

There was likewise no clue to its origin—at least, as far as the figure itself was concerned. I sought this in vain, but nothing appeared save only my great-uncle's strange question. Moreover, there was about this figure the feeling and the look of vast, incalculable age; this was unmistakable, for the material out of which it had been fashioned was a greenish-black stone with iridescent flecks and striations which suggested nothing geologically familiar to me. Furthermore, there were presently apparent, along the base of the figure, certain characters which I had initially mistaken for carving marks; yet it seemed clear after prolonged examination that these characters were not the haphazard, slipshod scars of any carving tool, but rather carefully cut into the stone; they were, in fact, hieroglyphs or characters of some language which bore no more resemblance to known linquistics than the carving itself did to the known types of art.

Small wonder, perhaps, that I was soon persuaded to set aside my paper on the Creole culture and background in favor of some more extensive research into my great-uncle's papers. It seemed quite patent to me that, however secretive he might have been, he was on the track of something, and there were certain factors—notably his card inquiring about "pagan worship" among the Creoles, and his interest in the aboriginal

pieces he had preserved—which tended to show that the object of his quest was very probably some form of ancient religion which he was attempting to trace back through the centuries in the remote corners of the world where its survival was far more likely than in the metropolitan centers of our time.

MY RESOLVE, however, was far more easily made than carried out, for my great-uncle's papers were in nothing at all resembling order or chronology. I had hoped, because of the comparative neatness of their piles in the trunks, that they were in at least reading order, but it took me a considerable time to effect any sort of even primary arrangement, and an even longer time to establish a sequence of a sort—though there was no assurance that that sequence was correct. Nevertheless, there was some reason to believe that if it were not, at least I could not be very far off, for my great-uncle's travel notes permitted of some dating, since it was possible to discover where he had traveled and what the order of his travels was. It was also possible to hit upon the original impetus of his travels, so unlikely a way for him to pass his last years, judging by his middle and earlier life.

It seemed quite probable that some experience, real or assimilated, associated with the two years during which he taught at Miskatonic University had set him off. But the immediate direction of his first travels apparently lay in a curious manuscript, which was evidently that of a castaway; how it had come into my great-uncle's possession I had no way of knowing, though it was probable that the short newspaper clipping attached to the manuscript might have put him on its trail. The clipping was but a brief account of the finding of a manuscript in a bottle; it was headed: LOST SHIP MYSTERY SOLVED. H. M. S. ADVOCATE SANK AT SEA! and read:

> AUCKLAND, N. Z., December 17.—The mystery of *H. M. S. Advocate*, lost last August, appeared to be solved today with the discovery of a manuscript written by First Mate Alistair Greenbie. The manuscript was discovered in a bottle floating not far from the coast of New Zealand by a fishing crew. While it appeared to be in large part the raving of a mind already disordered by long exposure, the essential facts of the *Advocate's* foundering seem clear. After clearing Singapore, the ship was caught in the storm which swept down from the Kuriles in mid-August; it was at that time in S. Latitude 47 degrees 53 minutes, W. Longitude 127 degrees 37 minutes. The crew of the *Advocate* was forced to abandon ship ten hours after the storm struck, and while the storm was still raging. Thereafter, they were at the mercy of high seas, and, if Greenbie's account can be believed, of incredibly brutal pirates whose action decimated the men who remained alive as the boat bearing Greenbie and his companions drove for the shore of an island which was presumably one of the Gilbert or Marianas Islands. Such an island as that described by Greenbie, however, is not known to local navigators, who are inclined to cast doubt upon Greenbie's account following the forced leave-taking of the ship."

The manuscript was written on the relatively small sheets of a pocket notebook and was pinned together. Though thick in pages, it was written in a shaky hand, and there were not many words on the page. Nevertheless, it was of substantial length, considering that its writer was very probably suffering from exposure and more or less convinced that he was doomed to die at sea.

"I am all that is left of the crew of *H. M. S. Advocate*, which set out from Singapore August 17, this year. On the 21st we ran into a storm, S. Latitude 47 degrees, 53 minutes, W. Longitude 127 degrees 37 minutes, coming out of the north and blowing something terrible. Captain Randall ordered all hands to and we did our best, but could not stand up against the storm in a craft no more seaworthy than the *Advocate*. At the beginning of the sixth watch, ten hours after the storm hit us, the order came to abandon ship; she was settling fast; something had torn her on the port side; and it was no good trying to save her. We got off in two boats. Cap-

tain Randall was in charge of the one which was the last off, and I was in charge of the other. Five men were lost getting away from the ship; the water was running higher than I ever saw it, and when the *Advocate* went down it was all the worse.

"WE WERE separated in the dark, but we got together again next day. We had enough provisions to last a good week, if we took care, and we figured we were somewhere between the Carolines and the Admiralties, closer to the latter and New Guinea; so we did what we could against the high seas to go in that direction. On the second day out, Blake got hysterical and caused an unfortunate accident; in the fight, the compass was lost. Since it was the only compass between the two boats, its loss was a serious matter. Nevertheless, we maintained, we thought, a course straight for the Admiralties or New Guinea, whichever showed up first, but after nightfall the first night we saw by the stars that we were off course by west. On the next night we were still off course, more so, if anything, but we could not be sure of our direction even after we had rectified the course, because clouds came up and covered the stars, all but the Southern Cross and Canopus, which would be seen just dimly behind the clouds for some time after the rest of them were down behind.

"We lost four men in those days. Siddons, Harker, Peterson, and Wiles went out of their heads. Then, during the fourth night, Hewett, who was on watch, woke us all up with a loud yell; and, when we were awake, we heard what he had heard—yelling and crying—it sounded horrible—coming over the water from where we judged Captain Randall's boat was; but in a few minutes it was all over. We tried to hail them, but we could get no answer; if it had been one of the men going beserk, we would have heard. But there was nothing. After a while we didn't try any more, just waited for morning, all of us more or less afraid in the darkness, with those terrible cries still ringing in our ears.

"Then the morning came, and we looked for the other boat. We saw it, all right, but there wasn't a man to be seen aboard her. I ordered the boat to make for her, thinking perhaps there still were men lying down in her, but when we came up alongside, there was nothing, not a sign of anybody, except that the captain's cap was still lying there. I looked the boat over carefully. The only thing I noticed was that the gunwales looked *slimy*, from the outside in, just as if something had pushed up out of the water and trailed into the boat. I couldn't make anything out of that.

"We cut away from the boat, leaving her just as we found her. We were not strong enough to warrant pulling the extra weight, and there was nothing to be gained by it. We didn't know which direction we were going now, didn't know just where we were, but we believed we were near the Admiralties. About four hours after sun-up, Adams gave a shout and pointed straight ahead, and there was land! We pulled for it, but it was farther off than we thought. It wasn't until late afternoon that we got close enough to see it fair.

"It was an island, but it wasn't like any I ever saw before. It was about a mile long, and, though it did not appear to have any vegetation on it, it seemed to have some kind of building in the middle of it; a big black stone pillar stuck up there, and down at the water's edge there seemed to be pieces of masonry. Jacobson had the glass, and I took it from him. Clouds were up and the sun was near to setting, but I could still see. The island didn't look right. It looked like mud, even the high ground. The building looked wrong, too. I thought the heat and the shortage of water was getting me, but just the same I said we wouldn't make for shore till next day.

"We never made for shore.

"That night it was Richardson's watch up to midnight, but he was too weak to take it; so Petrie took it and Simonds sat with him, in case one should fall asleep. We were all dog tired, having tried too hard to reach that land and overdoing it on the short rations we had, and we were all soon asleep. It seemed that we hadn't been asleep long when a yell from Simonds woke us. I was up quick as a cat and at his side.

"He was sitting there staring—his eyes wide and his mouth open—like a man in the extremity of fear. He babbled that Petrie was gone; that something had come up

out of the water and just took him off the boat. That was all he had time for; that was all any of us had time for. The next minute they were all over us, coming up out of the water like devils, swarming up on all sides!

The men fought like mad. I felt something tearing at me—like a scaly arm with a hand at the end of it, but *I swear to God that hand had webbed fingers! And I swear that the face I saw was like a cross between a frog and a man! And the thing had gills, and was slimy to the touch!*

"That is the last I remember of that night. Next thing something hit me; I think it was poor, fear-crazed Jed Lambert, and he probably thought he was hitting out at one of the things boarding us. I went down and I stayed down and that is probably what saved me; the things left me for dead.

"When I came to, it was day by some hours. That island was gone—I was far out, away from it. I drifted all that day, and night after, and this morning I put this down so that if I don't reach land, or if I am not sighted soon, I can put it into the bottle and hope and pray someone may find it and come back and get those things that took my men and Captain Randall and his men—for there is no doubt that is what happened to them, too—pulled out of their boat in the night by something from the lurking hells beneath these cursed waters.

(Signed) "ALISTAIR H. GREENBIE,
First Mate, H. M. S. *Advocate.*"

WHATEVER the authorities in Auckland thought of Greenbie's statement, it is certain that my great-uncle viewed it with the utmost gravity, for, following in chronological sequence, there was a very large assortment of similar stories—accounts of strange, inexplicable happenings, narratives of unsolved mysteries, of curious disappearances, of all manner of outré occurrences which might be printed in thousands of newspapers and read with but the most superficial interest by the vast majority of people.

For the most part, these accounts were short; it seemed evident that the majority of the editors themselves utilized them only as "filler" material, and it doubtless occurred to my great-uncle that if the Greenbie statement could have been treated so cavalierly, then other items must have similar stories behind them. Now it should be made clear that the clippings so carefully gathered by my great-uncle were similar in only one particular—and that is their utter strangeness. Apart from this, there was no apparent similarity among them at all. The several long accounts among them were of matters which were of some local concern; these were as follows:

(1) A comprehensive resumé of the facts concerning the disappearance of Dr. Laban Shrewsbury of Arkham, Massachusetts, to which were appended various obscure paragraphs copied from a manuscript or book by the vanished man, entitled *An Investigation into the Myth-Patterns of Latter-day Primitives with Especial Reference to the R'lyeh Text.* For instance: "The sea origin would seem incontrovertible, for every narrative of Cthulhu is related in some way, directly or indirectly, to the oceans; this is true whether it is of some manifestation supposedly stemming from Cthulhu, or whether an account of actions of his followers. One is not too certain of the validity of the Atlantis legend; yet there are certain apparent superficial similarities one ought not to dismiss without investigation. The focal points of the activities, arrived at by simply establishing concentric circles throughout various maps of the globe, would seem to be eight in number—(1) the South Pacific, with the center of the circle being at or near Ponape in the Carolines; (2) the Atlantic off the U. S. coast, with the center just off Innsmouth, Massachusetts; (3) the subterranean waters under Peru, centering about the ancient citadel of the Incas, Machu Picchu; (4) the North African country and the Mediterranean, with the center being in the vicinity of the Saharan Oasis of El Nigro; (5) North Canada and Alaska, centering north of Medicine Hat; (6) the Atlantic, centering in the Azores; (7) the southern half of the United States embracing the islands, centering somewhere in the Gulf of Mexico; and (8) Southwest Asia, the focal point a desert area in the Kuwait country (?) said to be near an ancient buried city. (Irem, the City of Pillars?)"

(2) An extensive inquiry, with notes, however disjointed, of the mysterious inva-

sion and partial destruction of Innsmouth by Federal agents.

(3) A weekly newspaper account of the disappearance of Henry W. Akeley from his hill country home near Brattleboro, with some mention of the horribly perfect representations of Akeley's face and hands found in the chair from which he had vanished, and some less prominent mention of terrible footprints glimpsed in the earth around the house.

(4) A translation of a lengthy letter which had appeared in a Cairo paper concerning manifestations of strange sea beasts half-seen in the waters off the Moroccan coast.

There were many of the shorter clippings, but all, like the long ones, concerned matters of almost bizarre strangeness, or with the suggestion of amazing mystery. There were accounts of strange storms, inexplicable earth tremors, police raids on cult gatherings, unsolved crimes of every description, unusual natural phenomena, narratives of travelers in out-of-the-way corners of the earth, and hundreds of similar matters.

In addition to these clippings there were various books—studies of the Inca civilization, two books on Easter Island, and baffling passages from books bearing titles of which I had never previously heard—the *Celaeno Fragments,* the *Pnakotic Manuscripts,* the *R'lyeh Text,* the *Book of Eibon,* the *Sussex Manuscript,* and the like.

Finally, then, there were my great-uncle's jottings.

These were, unfortunately, almost as cryptic as some of the accounts he had so carefully hoarded, but it was nevertheless possible to arrive at certain conclusions regarding them. There was nowhere any concise summary of his findings, but there was manifest a certain progression which led to unalterable conclusions. From the tenor of his jottings, it was easy enough to gather: (1) that my great-uncle was on the track of a loosely banded organization which worshipped one of a number of allied beings, the one specific object of my great-uncle's search being the central headquarters of the cult of Cthulhu (occasionally spelled Kthulhu, Clooloo, etc.) and that some or all of the remaining art objects were related to the cult worship; (2) that the worship of this being was very ancient and very evil; (3) that my great-uncle suspected that the curiously repellent stone image of unknown origin was an aboriginal artist's concept of the being, Cthulhu; (4) that my great-uncle more than suspected a relationship between the untoward events of the clippings he had collected, and the worship of this or allied beings. In this connection, his jottings are of singularly marked suggestiveness, as the following indicate:

"Certain parallels present themselves with damning and inescapable deductions to be drawn. For instance, Dr. Shrewsbury vanished within a year of the publication of his book on myth-patterns. The British scholar, Sir Landon Etrick, was killed in a strange accident six weeks after he permitted publication in the *Occult Review* his paper inquiring into the 'Fish-Men' of Ponape. The American writer, H. P. Lovecraft, died within a year of publication of his curious 'fiction', *The Shadow Over Innsmouth.* Of these and others only Lovecraft's death seems devoid of odd accident. NB: Some inquiry into H. P. L.'s allergy to cold is indicated. Also note a pronounced aversion to the sea and all things pertaining to it, carried so far as to inspire physical illness at sight of sea food.

"The conclusion is unavoidable that Shrewsbury and Lovecraft, too—and perhaps Etrick and others, as well—were close upon the track of some momentous discoveries concerning C."

"NOTE the curious significance of the oasis name: *El Nigro.* Roughly translated, this would be 'The Dark One,' which in turn would signify not alone the 'devil' but any creature of darkness. N. B.: No account available suggesting that either C. or those directly serving him have come forth save by darkness, except for the Johansen narrative recorded by Lovecraft. Only his minions by day. Compare with the Greenbie paper! Can there be any doubt but that the islands seen by Johansen and Greenbie are one and the same? I think not. But where, then, is it? No record out of Ponape. None out of Queensland. No mapped record of any kind. The Johansen account and that of Greenbie agree that it must lie between New Guinea and the Carolines, possibly west of

the Admiralties. Johansen hints that the island is *not* fixed, but sinks and rises. If so, what is the explanation of the 'buildings'?"

"Everywhere evidence, direct or hinted, of icthyic or batrachian 'men'—particularly in connection with certain events. Seen in Arkham prior to the disappearance of Dr. Shrewsbury. Glimpsed in London just after the death of Etrick. Greenbie mentions beings that seemed to him 'like a cross between a frog and a man!' The Lovecraft fictions abound with them, and his tale of Innsmouth suggests a horrible reason why the batrachian servitors of C. would not want a dead man, thus leaving Greenbie to escape.

* * * * *

"Apropos the Greenbie manuscript, compare such accounts as are available of the mysterious vanishing of the *Marie Celeste*, and other ships. If sea creatures could board boats of such size as the *Vigilant* (*cf.* Johansen), why not larger ships? If the hypothesis is tenable, therein lies a plausible if incredibly horrible explanation for many a mystery of the sea, for countless derelicts and vanished vessels. N. B.: On the other hand, the only accounts which might constitute direct evidence, it must be remembered, are those of men whose wits might have been jumbled by unaccustomed hardships."

* * * * *

There were many more notes of a similar nature; but there were also others, profoundly puzzling, evidently stemming from these primary notes. As my great-uncle delved deeper and deeper into his research, I found his notes tending toward growing obscurity. For instance, he wrote in one place, quite clearly under the stress of some excitement—"Could there not be some purely scientific principle involved in the time-space travel reputedly the power of the Ancient Ones? That is to say, something related to time as dimension, reducing C. and the others to utterly alien beings subject to other laws, however antipodal to natural laws as we know them?" And again: "What about the possibility of atomic disintegration with subsequent re-integration across time and space? And, if time is to be viewed purely as a dimension, and space as another, the 'openings' which are repeatedly mentioned must be fissures in those dimensioins. What else?"

But the most disturbing aspect of my great-uncle's strange quest did not make its appearance in his notes until the last few months of his life. Then there began to become manifest a marked uneasiness, and definite evidence that the cult or cults in which my great-uncle was interested were not phenomena of past time, but had survived into the present, and were, moreover, definitely malign and evil. For there appeared in the body of the notes certain patent questions—put down for himself, as if my great-uncle were asking himself questions the import of which he could hardly credit.

"If I saw rightly," he wrote in one place, after returning from Transylvania, "my traveling companion was of marked batrachian aspect. His speech, however was the purest French. Nothing to show where he boarded the Simplon-Orient. It took effort to lose him at Calais. Am I being followed? If so, where can *they* have found out?" And again: "Followed in Rangoon, without doubt. Follower extremely elusive, but, judging from a reflection in a window pane, not one of the Deep Ones. In stature suggestive of the Tcho-Tcho people, which would be apropos, since their habitat is supposedly near by." And yet once more: "Three in Arkham, in the vicinity of the University. The only question seems to be: how much do they suspect that I know? And will they wait until I publish, as in the cases of Shrewsbury, Vordennes, and the others?"

The implications in all this were crystal clear.

My great-uncle, hard on the track of a strange, malign cult, had come to their notice, and his existence was menaced by followers of the cult. Then it was, with instinctive conviction, that I knew my great-uncle's death in Limehouse was not an accident at all, but a carefully arranged murder!

II

I COME now to those events which confirmed my resolutioin to abandon my Creole project and take up instead the problem which had engaged the attention of my

Great-uncle Asaph Gilman. My purely cursory interest had become crystalized at the conviction that my great-uncle had been murdered, but when I began to cast about for some clue as to where to begin my search for his murderers and the cult to which they belonged, I did not know where to start. Search his papers as I might, there seemed to be no one place to which, or person to whom, I could go in order to make a beginning. Despite all the terrible hints and suggestions of my great-uncle's papers and books, there was no true focal point; considered as a whole, the papers were more in the nature of preliminary work leading up to hypotheses and conclusions which my great-uncle had not had time to make.

What resolved my doubts as well as the obscurities of my great-uncle's papers was a series of extraordinary dreams and their even more extraordinary aftermath. These dreams began on the very first night after I had come to my decision in regard to my great-uncle's search culminating in his murder before he had had opportunity to conclude his quest. The dreams were of a remarkable vividness, and each was a singularly perfect unit, with none of the haziness, the incoherence, and the incredible phantasmagoria of most dreams. They were, in effect, astonishing in that they were vivid enough to seem not dreams at all, but clairvoyant and clairaudient experiences transcending natural laws. Moreover, each dream impressed me sufficiently to impel me to set it down for my future reference, so that I might forget no single detail of the experience.

My first dream, then, was as follows:

> Someone called my name. "Claiborne, Claiborne Boyd! Claiborne, Claiborne Boyd!" The voice was a man's voice, and it seemed to come from a very great distance, and from *above*. I saw myself wake from sleep; as I did so, the head and shoulders of a man appeared. The head was that of an elderly man with long white hair, clean-shaven, with a firm, pronounced chin, and full lips. He had a Roman nose, and wore odd dark glasses with shields running along the side of the eyes as well. Since I awakened, he said no more but bade me watch.
>
> The scene changed; the head faded away and vanished. I, my bed, my room likewise vanished. The scene which came up in its stead was vaguely familiar. I passed along a street which appeared to be in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It was away from the university, and in a district where professional people live. There was someone I was meant to see here, and presently I found him; it was a tall, gaunt man, dressed in black. He walked oddly, and wore a muffler and tinted glasses. Though he appeared to be a stranger in Cambridge, he knew just where he wanted to go. He entered a building and went directly to a suite of offices. The offices were those of Judah and Byron, Attorneys at Law. He entered the offices and asked to see Mr. Judah. After a moment of waiting, he was shown into Mr. Judah's office.
>
> Mr. Judah was a middle-aged man who wore a pince-nez. His hair was beginning to gray at his temples, and he was dressed plainly in gray. The suit was gabardine, the cut severe. I heard them talk.
>
> "Good afternoon, Mr. Smith," said Mr. Judah. "What can I do for you?"
>
> Mr. Smith's voice was very strange; it sounded muffled and distorted, as if he had a speech defect brought about by over-production of saliva. He said, "I understand you represent the estate of the late Asaph Gilman, sir?"
>
> Mr. Judah nodded.
>
> "Mr. Gilman was engaged on a work in which I, as a fellow scholar, have a deep interest. I made Mr. Gilman's acquaintance in Vienna over a year ago, and I was given to understand at that time that he had papers and notes about his progress in his work. These papers cannot be of any conceivable interest to anyone but a scholar similarly interested. Can you tell me whether there is any possibility of my acquiring them from Mr. Gilman's estate?"
>
> Mr. Judah shook his head. "I am sorry, Mr. Smith, but Mr. Gilman's papers have gone to his next of kin, at his special request."

"Perhaps I could arrange to purchase them from him?"

"That is out of our hands, Mr. Smith."

"Can you give me his address, sir?"

Though Mr. Judah hesitated, he finally said, "I see no harm in it," and gave him my name and address.

The scene vanished, and the head of the elderly white-haired man returned. He told me to take care of the papers, to conceal them in a safe place. Then the dream ended.

Now, in itself, such a dream would not be unusual, following my prolonged study of my great-uncle's strange papers. But its extraordinary vividness made such an impression on me, not only at my awaking after the dream had run its course, but throughout the following morning, that I was at last impelled to place a long-distance call to Mr. Judah himself, and ask him whether anyone had made inquiry for me.

"My dear Mr. Boyd, what a coincidence!" his voice came over the wire—in precisely the accents of the Mr. Judah of my dream. "We had a man in here yesterday asking after you—or, rather, after your great-uncle's papers. A Mr. Japhet Smith. We took the liberty of giving him your address. Probably a crackpot, but evidently quite harmless. He seemed to want to buy your great-uncle's papers or at least to consult them."

AS MAY well be imagined, this confirmation of my dream had the most surprising effect on me. I had no longer any doubt whatsoever that "Mr. Japhet Smith" was not a fellow-scholar at all, but a representative of the same malign cult which had brought about my great-uncle's death. If this were the case, he would certainly come to New Orleans after the papers. What, then, to do? He was not likely to be deterred by my refusal to sell them, but would undoubtedly take other means to obtain them. I determined, therefore, to lose no time in re-arranging and packing my great-uncle's papers, and moving them from my quarters to some place of concealment where Smith or any of his fellows would not be likely to discover them.

I spent the afternoon, therefore, going through the papers once more, and, in doing so, I came across two very curious jottings on the backs of envelopes. They were more than usually cryptic, and both made pointed reference to the same subject. The first, evidently made while my great-uncle was in Cairo, read simply: "Andrada? Surely not!" The second, made on his last visit to Paris, just prior to his fateful visit to London, read: "Ask Andros about Andrada." I recognized these jottings at last for a direction in which to take up my great-uncle's quest. But who was Andros? And where was he?

I redoubled my efforts to find more information in the papers before me, some further clue to the identity of Andros or Andrada—but there was nothing. However, in view of the fact that both names were Latin in origin, it seemed fairly reasonable to deduce that their bearers lived in some Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking country; and, since my great-uncle's travels had taken him only for the briefest of times into Spain and Portugal, it was far more likely that these late objects of his interest were residents of some other place on the globe—from the Azores to South America. That it was in all probability South America seemed indicated, since there were enough hints in my great-uncle's papers to suggest that his next visit would be made to some South American place.

But I had little time to speculate farther, for the day was drawing to a close, and much work still needed to be done to make the papers ready for transportation. I was motivated not only by my curious dream and its confirmation, but by an even stranger conviction that I could not afford to lose any time whatsoever. I worked, therefore, with all haste, and by the end of the day I had finished. True, certain facts from my great-uncle's papers I had committed to memory; but all his books and papers themselves I had carefully re-packed, and by the end of that day I had had them taken to the local express office, and committed them to ninety-day storage, prepaying all charges, with additional payment to cover subsequent instruction—that, if the two trunks were not called for within the set period, they were to be shipped to the library of Miskatonic University, in Arkham. Following this, I

had taken all receipts and mailed them to myself in care of Judah and Byron, with a brief covering note of instructions sent separately.

When I returned to my apartment, darkness had fallen. Was it my imagination or had someone been skulking about outside the building in which I stayed? Surely Mr. Japhet Smith had not had time to reach New Orleans. I shook myself free of my fancies and grimly mounted to my apartment, half expecting to find evidence of unwelcome callers. But there was nothing, and I allowed myself a brief smile at the manner in which my great-uncle's odd papers and my strange dream had taken hold of me —brief, because I remembered, if my great-uncle had been right in his speculation that the cult of Cthulhu had members all over the world, it was certainly not impossible that there were some in New Orleans and that Smith might well have reached one of them by telegraph! And, indeed, had not my great-uncle asked me to keep posted for any hint of strange pagan worship—by which surely he had reference to that of Cthulhu and those nebulous others?

I put out my light and went to the window, standing behind the diaphanous curtains to look down into the street below. The quarter where I lived was one of the oldest in New Orleans; its buildings were gracious, if old-fashioned; they were inhabited by artists, writers, and students, for the most part, and certain devotees of music from the immortals to the blues were likewise domiciled in the vicinity. The street, therefore, was likely to be lively at all hours, and now, between nine and ten o'clock in the evening—a still comparatively early hour—there was no lack of people. It took some time to isolate anyone who did not seem to belong to the street. Even then, I could not be sure. But certainly there was one individual, not plainly visible, who might indeed be watching this house, and my apartment in particular. He walked slowly up one side of the block and down the other, and, though he never glanced in the direction of the house, he was aware of every opening and closing of the door; of that I was as certain as if I had had incontrovertible knowledge. I was struck, too, by his gait, which was peculiarly shuffling, like that of Japhet Smith in my dream—and, more damnably still, akin to that gait ascribed to the batrachian followers of Cthulhu in various of the accounts accompanying the papers of which I had now temporarily disposed.

I DREW back from the window, my mind in turmoil. Lacking any knowledge, I could not proceed against a casual walker on the street, who might embarrass me by turning out to be a poet in pursuit of the muse—which would probably be as natural and readily accepted an explanation as any that might be given. It was not too far-fetched to suppose that some attempt to get at my room might be made. However, after sitting for some time in the dark trying to decide what I might do if our positions were reversed, I concluded that, if the fellow below were actually a watcher, the course of events must have been as follows: Smith had telegraphed to put a watch on me and my apartment; the watch had arrived fortuitously during my absence with the trunks, and would now stay, perhaps changing places with someone else for part of the time, until Smith himself could arrive. Presumably the members of the cult were not eager to create "incidents" by means of which keys to their presence might be afforded anyone curious enough to look for them; hence it seemed unlikely that any sort of attack would be made until Smith had satisfied himself that no other course was open to him.

Nevertheless, I waited in the darkness until midnight; only then, when the street below was deserted, and I could no longer catch sight of the watcher, did I venture to to go to bed.

That night I had the second dream, which was even more startling than the first, though its full import was not destined to come to me for some days thereafter. As in the case of the first—particularly after the confirmation of that first dream—I made a full and complete record of it.

The dream began exactly as did the first dream.

The gray-haired man with dark glasses appeared as before. This time there was more than a haze surrounding him. In

the background rose what appeared to be a great building of some kind. It was not clear whether the background was an interior or exterior, but there was a shadowy representation of what seemed to be a massive stone table between the head and the masonry behind. It was masonry of utterly alien construction—a great vaulted chamber, if an interior, the stone groinings of which were lost in shadow above; there appeared to be a round window of colossal size, and monolithic columns beside which the head was incredibly puny. There were shelves holding gigantic books along the walls; strange hieroglyphs were visible on their backs. Indistinctly, carvings appeared to stand out on the monstrous megalithic granite masonry, the pieces of which seemed to be convex-topped blocks supported by precise fitted, concave-bottomed courses. No flooring was visible anywhere, but neither was any part below the chest of the individual who called to me.

I was told to pay close attention.

The scene faded. Once more a familiar street appeared. This time I recognized it at once. It was a street in Natchez, Mississippi, where I pursued my studies prior to taking up the Creole study in New Orleans. I seemed to move along the street, but no one was aware of me. The post office came into view. I entered the post office. I went through the lobby, past the rows of boxes, into the interior of the post office. The postmaster and his assistants were at work there. No one noticed me.

Now something very strange took place. The shelving into which letters were placed for shipment from the post office appeared to fade, and down behind the shelves I saw a thick letter. It was addressed to me, and I recognized the handwriting as my great-uncle's. It was postmarked London the day before my great-uncle's death. It was clear immediately what happened. The letter—like my great-uncle's last card from Paris—had been sent to my Natchez address, and forwarded from there, for it bore my New Orleans address alongside the scratched-out Natchez address, but somehow the letter slipped down and was overlooked. Now it was not seen by anyone in the post office.

Once more I heard the voice of the man in black spectacles. This time he told me to mark his every word.

"Mr. Boyd," he said—his manner friendly but urgent—"you must do precisely as I say. As you know, your apartment is being watched. Tomorrow Mr. Smith will call; it is not necessary that you see him. Sometime tomorrow, prepare to leave your rooms without the necessity of returning there, make sure that you are not followed, and go to Natchez. Retrieve the letter in the post office. It is from your great-uncle and it is clear enough to enable you to follow instructions if you are still determined to do so. Take the utmost care that this letter does not go astray."

Then the voice faded away.

IT IS a tribute to the vividness of the dream that I did not for a moment question its validity; from the instant that I awoke in the darkness of my room, I knew, too, that with the coming of dawn, I would set about to follow the precise instructions set down by my mentor in dreams—go to Natchez and read my great-uncle's final letter with every intention of following any direction it might contain.

Despite a gnawing curiosity to come face to face with Japhet Smith, I realized full well that once he knew of my unwillingness to part with my grand-uncle's papers, it would be triply difficult if not impossible for me to elude pursuit. It was, therefore, with something akin to reluctance that I evaded my follower next day—for I was followed; I had not the shadow of a doubt about that; and my follower was an individual of suggestively repellent aspect—wide-mouthed, squat-browed, lidless-eyed, and almost earless, with an odd kind of leathery skin. I had no difficulty doing so by means of one of the most time-honored methods of avoiding pursuit—going into one door of a building and out the other.

In Natchez I could not, of course, hint that I knew of the existence of my great-uncle's lost letter; but I simply explained that I had come up from New Orleans to inquire after a letter I should have received,

and prevailed upon them finally, after my earnest and anxious entreaties, to look behind the rack where I knew it to be lying. There it was found, amidst astonished apologies, and given to me. By this time, I had long ceased to wonder by what agency I had been acquainted with this and the facts about Smith; that my dreams were not orthodox dream experiences was only too manifest, but by what power I acquired this dream-knowledge I could not surmise.

The tangibility of the letter in hand, however, overcame speculation. I opened it eagerly and read. A glance was enough to assure me that it was of the utmost importance insofar as my great-uncle's strange quest was concerned, and that it had been written at a time of great stress, when my great-uncle no longer had any doubt about the identity of his pursuers, and when he had some intimation of his fate.

"My dear nephew," he had written in a script slightly larger than his usual small writing, doubtless because of his agitation, "I feel it incumbent upon me to take such steps as might assure me of some success in the search I have been conducting for many months—even if after death, for it is certain that my footsteps are dogged by some of the Deep Ones day and night. Some time ago I made provision in my will that you were to receive my papers, as well as a modest stipend to aid your work, whether it followed my own course or not. I make haste now to acquaint you with the nature of that work.

"Some time ago—let it suffice to say that it was after my retirement from Harvard—I stumbled upon a most curious and rare book, the *Necronomicon,* by an Arabian, Abdul Alhazred—a book concerning which perhaps the less expounded the better, for it dealt with a very ancient worship, with cults and cult rites, weaving an entire mythology which seemed at first glance to parallel the familiar Creation story, but which presently touched upon strange corners in my memory, so that before I knew, I was deeply wrapped in the mythology of which it treated. This was, candidly, because I knew of certain events which seemed most oddly to verify some of the things written about so many centuries ago, and I determined, therefore, to study the subject with closer attention—one of those impulses which often come to retired educators. Would that I had turned away from that accursed book and forgotten it!

"For not only did I unearth evidence of certain damnable facts concerning the book and allied texts which I studied, but I discovered that cults of peoples were devoted to serving ancient beings still in our time. And I learned the truth of the strange couplet of the Arab's—

That is not death which can eternal lie,
And with strange eons even death may die.

"There is far too little time to tell you all. Believe me when I say only that there would appear to be indisputable and damning evidence that this earth, in common with other planets and stars in this and other universes, was at one time inhabited by beings not altogether of flesh and blood, or at least of that flesh and blood we understand, and not entirely of matter as we understand it, beings called the Great Old Ones, whose marks are still to be found in hidden places of the world—the Easter Island pieces, for one—beings which had been expelled from the elder stars by the Elder Gods, who were beneficent, while the Great Old Ones or Ancient Ones were malign in intent insofar as mankind is concerned. I have neither time nor space to recapitulate this entire mythology to you. Suffice it to say that these Great Old Ones did not die, but were imprisoned or took refuge—this is not clear, but presumably it is the former—in great subterranean places on earth and on other stars, and legend has it that 'when the stars are right,' which is to say—when the stars are once again in the position in which they were at the time of the vanishing of the Great Old Ones: a cycle, as it were—they will rise again, the way having been prepared for them by their servants on earth.

"Of these, the most dreaded is called Cthulhu. I have come upon evidence of belief in Cthulhu in all corners of the globe—in the far north, certain Eskimos carry on a ritual to the supreme elder devil or *tornasuk,* an image of which bears a striking resemblance to those hideous bas-reliefs supposedly typical of the the Great Old Ones in appearance; in the Arabian deserts as well

as in Egypt and Morocco, there is worship of a fearful being of the sea, in queer, backward areas of our own country there is a devilish adherence to an ancient belief in things half-frog, half-man—and so on, without end. I became convinced that worship of Hastur and Shub-Niggurath and Yog-Sothoth was less widespread than that of Cthulhu, and I set out to discover as many pockets of such worship as possible.

"Admittedly, I did so at first with the most impersonal of motives. But, as the final dread knowledge came—that these servants were preparing to open the portals of time and space to beings of which our own science knows nothing and against which it is likely to be powerless—I ceased being impersonal, and I began consciously to attempt to learn the identity of the most potent of the groups following and serving the cult of Cthulhu, and the leader of that group, bent upon doing everything in my power to end the activities of that group, even if it meant exterminating their leader myself.

"Though I am close to learning his identity, I am yet too far away. Somehow those hellish frog-men or fish-men, whichever they may be called, known as the Deep Ones, who are among the closest servants of Cthulhu, have discovered my activities. I do not know whether they are aware of my intention; they cannot be, for I have not heretofore set it down or confessed it. Yet they are watching me—as they have been watching for months past—and I feel that I may not have much time left.

"THERE is no good in burdening you with further details.

"I want to say only that if you decide to carry on, I think the most likely focal point of activity now is in Peru, in the Inca country beyond the old fortress of Salapunco. The first thing you must do is to go to Lima, call on Professor Vibberto Andros of the University there; tell him I have sent you—or better still, show him this letter—and ask him about Andrada."

That, apart from his signature, was the complete letter. Accompanying it was a crudely drawn map of a terrain utterly unknown to me, and with no identifying key.

III

PROFESSOR VIBBERTO ANDROS was a short, thin man, venerable in appearance, with silky white hair, and an ascetic face. His skin was dark, but not swarthy, and his eyes were black. He read my great-uncle's last letter with great deliberation, but with interest he made no effort to conceal. When at last he put it down, he shook his head sympathetically and expressed his condolence at my great-uncle's death, of which the letter was his first knowledge.

I thanked him and asked the question I had to ask, regardless of such inner convictions as I had—whether, in his opinion, my great-uncle suffered from mental aberrations.

"I think not," he replied judiciously. Then he shrugged and added, "But who is to decide this—as you call it—'mental aberration'? Neither of us, surely. You think it perhaps because of this—" he tapped the letter—"and his papers? But I am much afraid these things are true, as he has written. I do not know to what degree, nor whether more or less. Your great-uncle was not alone in his belief. And there are books, manuscripts, documents—rare, well cared for in some of our great libraries, seldom consulted. But they are there, written by people separated by centuries in time, by space incalculable—all treat of the same phenomena. Surely that is not coincidence?"

I agreed that it was not likely and asked about Andrada.

He raised his eyebrows. "It puzzles me he should press you to ask about him. I do not know why he wishes to know. Andrada—Fr. Andrada—is a priest, a missionary among the Indians of the interior. In his own way he is a great man, possibly even a saintly man, though the Church hesitates to recognize him as such—the Church is exceedingly careful in such matters, as no doubt you know, and that is well-advised, since it is presumably infallible in spiritual matters, and it cannot afford to be in error. Andrada has worked for many years among the Indians, and I understand his conversations are numbered well in the thousands."

"For some reason my great-uncle believed you could give me some information about Andrada which he sought," I said, choosing

my words carefully. "Would it be possible to see him in person? Is he in Lima?"

"I am sure he would see you, certainly. But the problem is to find him. His work takes him into the remotest places of the country—and, as you know, we have many, since most of Peru is along the coast, and the mountains are difficult and treacherous—even for many of the Inca descendants."

I went on then to inquire further about the myth-patterns into which my great-uncle had been researching, and, in the course of our conversation, it occurred to me to ask my host whether he knew anyone fitting the description of my dream mentor. I had no sooner mentioned the distinctive dark spectacles, than Professor Andros nodded and smiled.

"Who could forget him, indeed? A very wise man. I met him many years ago in Mexico City at an educational convention there. I was much impressed by him."

"A South American, then?"

On the contrary, a countryman of yours—Dr. Laban Shrewsbury, of Arkham, Massachusetts."

"But he is dead!" I cried out involuntarily. "That cannot be!"

Professor Andros turned his black eyes on me and gazed at me steadily for a long moment before replying. "I wonder. I have said he was a very wise man—I do not mean merely in the assimilation of knowledge. He vanished, I think, and his house burned. But previous to that he vanished for twenty years, and turned up again, after which he vanished once more, and his house was then destroyed. No corpus delicti was established—no part of any human body was discovered in the ruins of that house or elsewhere. I think a wise man would conclude only that his death was not proven." His eyes narrowed and he went on. "But when you say it cannot be, you must have reason. What is it? Have you seen him, then?"

Thus bluntly asked, I outlined briefly my dream experiences.

He listened with grave interest, nodding from time to time. "The description is right," he said when I had finished. "The sound of the man seems right. I am fascinated by your description of his background—more than I can say. Ancient, monolithic chambers! What a concept! And surely not of earth."

"How can one rationally explain such dreams?" I demanded.

He smiled wearily. "My boy, how can one rationally explain one's self? Do not ask me."

I TOOK out the map my great-uncle had enclosed with his last letter and spread it before the professor, saying nothing. He looked at it for a long time, following the crude, hastily drawn lines, gazing intently at the little squares, those with and those without crosses, and the circles and rectangles. Finally he put a delicate index finger on the map and began to trace it.

"Here," he said, "is Lima. This is the trail into the mountains, to Cuzco, then there to Machu Picchu, and there to Sachsahuaman. There is Ollantaytambo, and along there the Cordillera de Vilcanota. Over here, surely, is Salapunco. The object of the map would be the area beyond; the trail ends there."

"And what region is that?"

"A country largely unknown, and largely uninhabited. It is curious, this map. Right now there is much unrest among the Indians there—the kind of unrest which has no meaning, but which is ever-menacing. He coult not have known."

But I knew intuitively that my great-uncle *had* known—how, I could not tell.

And I was certain that I had not come to the wrong place, that my great-uncle's researches were leading him to the right source of the secret world-wide resurgence of the cult of Cthulhu! Somehow I must go into the interior.

"How will I know Andrada when I see him?" I asked.

Professor Andros placed an old photograph of the priest before me. It had been clipped from a newspaper and showed a man of burning, fanatic eyes and mouth, almost grim in appearance—his asceticism and intensity were manifest in every aspect of his features.

"If you go beyond Machu Picchu, take care. You are armed?"

I nodded.

"You won't need guides until after Cuzco. I wish you would keep me informed of your

progress. You will find runners at Cuzco, who can travel from your camp with letters which can be sent in the regular way from Cuzco.

I thanked him and returned to my hotel, burdened with books he gave me—books containing transcripts of the *Sussex Manuscript*, the *Celeano Fragments*, and the *Cultes des Goules* of the Comte d'Erlette—books which contained in their pages the incredible legendary of the Elder Gods and their banishment of the Great Old Ones from Betelgueze—Azathoth, the blind idiot god; Yog-Sothoth, the All-in-One and One-in-All Great Cthulhu, said to lie dreaming in his great house in sunken R'lyeh; Hastur, the Unspeakable, Him Who Is not to Be Named, hidden on a dark star near Aldebaran; Nyarlathotep, abiding in darkness; Ithaqua, who rides the winds high above earth; Cthugha, who will return from Fomalhaut; Tsathoggua, waiting in N'kai—all, all waiting upon the propitious time, and upon the activities of their secret servants among men for a return to their dominions—a grotesque lore out of the remote past, but a lore with such an incalculable mass oof supporting evidence stretching from the most distant times into the present as to be blasphemously shocking in its suggestiveness. I could well understand my great-uncle's desire to encompass his purpose, and I understood his imperturbability in the prospect of facing death, the casual manner in which he could write of it against the urgence inherent in his desire to do all in his power to ward off the rise of Cthulhu's minions. I read far into the night, long after the hotel was quiet and even the drowsy hum of Lima's night life had subsided.

THAT night I had the third of the dream visitations of my mentor.

Dr. Shrewsbury appeared as before, heralding his arrival by calling me by name. This time there was no change of scene, but only the single monolithic chamber of the previous dream, with the Doctor's head and shoulders struck out against that weird and impressively unearthly background. He spoke to me at length, warning me to acquaint no one with my purpose in seeking Andrada, urging me to take the utmost care, and, once convinced of the object of my search, not to delay action. The leader of the cult must die, and as much destruction as possible must be wrought in the headquarters of the cult, which was deep in the interior beyond the ancient fortress of Salapunco.

He went on to say to me that my escape from this country would be all but impossible. Yet there was one way in which it might be accomplished. I must wait to go on my trek into the interior of Peru until I found at my disposal three articles, which would be delivered to me within the course of a day or so. These articles were, first, a phial of a golden mead which would render me insensitive to travel in space high over earth; second, a five-pointed star; third, a whistle. The star-stone, he explained, would protect me against the Deep Ones and other minions of Cthulhu, but not against Cthulhu or his body-servants. The whistle would summon to my aid a gigantic flying creature which would transport me to a place where my body would lie in suspended animation for an endless time, while my essence would join Dr. Shrewsbury far across the gulfs of intestellar space. After my purpose had been accomplished, and before the vengeance of the survivors could be wreaked on me, I was to drink the mead, carrying the star-stone, blow the whistle, and repeat a strange formula—*"Iä! Iä! Hastur! Hastur cf'ayak 'vulgtmm, vugtlagl vulgtmm! Ai! Ai! Hastur!"*—and submit to whatever happened thereafter without fear.

Extraordinary as this dream was, what followed was even more so.

As the dawn approached, I was awakened—so I dreamed—by the sound of great wings. Then, at the window of my room, I saw a monstrous, horrible winged creature; from its back stepped a young man. He entered the room through the window, placed something on my bureau, and went out the way he had come. The winged thing, only a very small part of which I could see, carried him instantly out of sight, the sound of its wings diminishing with great rapidity.

Two hours later, when I awoke, I went doubtfully to the bureau—and there, exactly where I had dreamed—*or had I dreamed it!*—lay three objects—a whistle, a phial of a golden liquid, and a little gray-green, star-shaped stone, the exact duplicate of that

stone among my great-uncle's collected pieces now reposing in storage in New Orleans!

I shall start into the interior before the day is out.

IV

9th November

DEAR Professor Andros:

I am encamped in the vicinity of Manchu Picchu, and, though I have not been here more than seven hours, I have already happened upon some curiously disquieting facts. It came about through one of the guides who was retained for me through the agency of the fellow Santos whom you recommended. Yesterday, while on the way to the ancient Inca citadel, I stopped some natives along the trail and asked them if they knew the whereabouts of Fr. Andrada. Crossing themselves, they gestured behind them, in the direction we were traveling, but could give me no precise information. However, the guide in question rode up not long after and confessed that he had overheard my inquiry, and that, if I did not fear to leave the trail at Machu Picchu, he would take me to his older brother, who lay ill at his mountain home not far away.

I said I would not be afraid; so, at the appointed place, I rode with him perhaps three miles from the trail we followed, and found his brother as he had described. Both men, I need hardly say, are of Quichua-Ayar stock; the brother, who appeared to me to be dying, was a convert to Catholicism—one of Andrada's—though my guide, a much younger man, was not. Learning that I sought Andrada, he was at first extremely reluctant to speak; but as soon as he understood that I did not personally know Andrada, and that I was not a follower of the priest's, he began to talk rapidly, as if he feared he would not have enough time to tell me what he wished to say.

I cannot reproduce his language here, of course; he spoke in garbled Spanish, and the gist of what he had to say was extremely puzzling. He confessed to a great admiration for Andrada, amounting almost to veneration. But Andrada, he said, was dead. He was "no more as once he had been." Andrada was not Andrada; he was another, whose honeyed words taught evil things. He said he knew where a "paper" from Andrada was concealed, and if I could spare his brother, he would send him there to obtain it for me. It would take two days on foot from this place. Naturally, I assented readily, and the guide has now gone on his mission.

I make haste to report this to you. I do not at the moment know what to make of it, but the old Indian was much agitated, and his sincerity is not to be doubted; moreover, he seemed relieved to be able to tell someone who might understand. I have the opportunity to dispatch this letter by the hands of a party of American tourists who have just completed a guided tour through the Inca ruins. I am, yours cordially,

Claiborne Boyd

10th November

Dear Professor Andros:

My guide returned last night with the "paper" reputed to have been written by Andrada. I have read it, and I conceive it to be of such importance that I am entrusting it to the hand of one of my runners to be taken to Cuzco and mailed to you without further delay. The paper is evidently but a fragment of a larger account. I am at the moment about to remove my encampment into the gorge of the mountains beyond Salapunco, near which place, I have been told, Andrada is soon to conduct what I understand to be a "revival" or "mission" or some such similar affair. I am, sincerely,

Claiborne Boyd

The Andrada paper in translation:

". . . Who this fellow is, or whence he comes, none knows. He is assuredly evil. He plays strange music on ancient pipes resembling flutes. Since he has come there is unrest and wickedness abounding. Everywhere is evil, even in the clouds; and, rising from the waters there are strange sounds—as if great creatures walked in subterranean places. I have inveighed against him, and I shall not cease my endeavors to overcome the evil teachings which are his.

"A great fear is upon my people. They speak to me of evil or some such name

who will rise again older than earth, of strange beings, and one of whom they name Kulu or some such name out of the sea and become master over all earth, and, in time, over the entire universe. I have questioned some of them as closely as their reticence would permit, and it is not the anti-Christ they fear, but a being 'not a man,' in their words, who was 'old as time' before the teachings of Christ were made known to mankind. One of my people drew a crude picture of this being, as it was handed down to him from his ancestors. I thought I would see a representation of Pachacamac, to whom human sacrifices were made, or of Illa Tici Viracocha—but it was neither of these—though it might have been a drawing of one of the supernatural monsters in which the old Incas had belief. It was a bestial representation of a creature which was a horrible travesty on man—squat, anthropoid, with tentacles and a beard of serpents or tentacles, clawed paws or hands, and winged in some fashion, similar to bats.

"He has come preaching the worship of this being, and predicting his 'return.' I asked my people whether any of them remembered Kulu. None did, but some confessed that their people in past generations remembered. But none had seen him. Many, I felt sure, concealed their belief in him. It is dismaying to observe this tendency among my people. I shall take steps to drive out this stranger, if need be with the lash. Yet I am not unaware of a strong aura of danger, of mortal menace which abounds everywhere—not the evil of Satanism, but a greater evil beyond that, more primal and terrible. I cannot define it, but I feel that my very soul is in the greatest danger. . . ."

14th November

Dear Professor Andros:

I have seen Andrada—as yet only from a distance by means of my telescope. The guides told me it would be dangerous for me to approach too closely; so I took their advice, set up my telescope, and watched his gathering. The man I saw in the cassock was not the man whose photograph you were kind enough to show me. Yet he was singled out to me as Andrada, and he played the part of Andrada. That is, he harangued the natives gathered to hear him—I should estimate them at three hundred. And certainly his harangue was not a Christian sermon, for he had them groveling. What I found most disturbing was the resemblance between him and the Japhet Smith of my dream; certainly they were not one and the same, I do not suggest it—but it is equally certain that there is a relationship between them, for the Andrada I saw by means of my glass has that curiously batrachian mouth, those lidless eyes and the strange pasty complexion associated with Smith; nor was there any sign of ears. I think there cannot be any doubt but that Fr. Andrada has been killed, and someone is masquerading as Andrada for a far more horrible purpose than one might believe at first glance. And it is not too much to believe that he is one of the Deep Ones. . . .

Later: One of my native guides, who mingled with the "mission" before Andrada, has returned and tells me that Andrada spoke in a tongue foreign to him, though it awoke something in memory—he says he may have heard it as a small boy. What has seemed to me most illuminatingly conclusive is a sentence he says was repeated over and over as a kind of chant by Andrada, and repeated by his listeners. He strove to reproduce it for me, and, from his attempts I have no question but that it was the strange chant heretofore recorded in various places, and always associated with this dread worship—

Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn.

which has been translated to read: "In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming."

NEXT morning: Dr. Shrewsbury appeared to me last night, apparently in dream—I put it "apparently" because I am no longer so sure that I am dreaming. I now understand far more of this grotesque and shocking cult-worship. It would appear, from what S. says, that he has made use of certain servitors of Hastur, who oppose

Cthulhu's return, to effect opposition in fact to the minions of Cthulhu. Hence, the winged creatures of my previous dream-experience. The mead, it would seem, is a soporific which has more than the ordinary properties of such drugs, but separates the self—the astral or spirit, I suppose one could put it—from the body, which is left inanimate, but living. The body is transported to a place of safety, and the self takes another corporeal form in another place—but not the form of a man—a place far removed from our universe—Celaeno in the Hyades. He is able to communicate with me at will by a kind of hypnosis. . . . Andrada, he says, is as suspect, but the headquarters of the cult is in a secret place of worship once used by the Incas, an abandoned temple cut into the rock of the gorge not far from our camp. I am going there as soon as it is dusk tonight.

Later: I found the meeting-place. It lay at the end of a flight of steps which began behind a hidden stone door opening into the solid wall of rock out of the gorge—evidently an ancient Incan passage, for the rough-hewn stones were similar to those in Machu Picchu and Sachsahuaman. The place of worship appeared to be an old temple of some kind, as described, but there was no opening to the sky, contrary to the religious custom. There was, however, a pool of some size—the room itself was of cavernous size, as I should have said at once, capable of holding, I should estimate, several thousand people—and from this pool emanated a hellish, subaqueous green light. It would appear that the worshipers gather around the pool, for the ancient altar at the far end of the room has been long in disuse. I did not remain there long, for I was aware of strange stirrings of the water, and the sound of a distant music, as if worshipers were approaching, though, on my emergence from the meeting-place, I saw no one.

* * * * *

THIS is perhaps the last you will hear from me.

Learning from one of my guides that an important gathering of some kind was to take place in the old temple room in the gorge tonight, I returned to the spot and hid myself. I had hardly completed my concealment in the recesses of the altar, when there was an ominous stirring and churning of that green-litten water, and something rose to the surface.

What I saw there nauseated me.

One glance sent me reeling backward—that I did not cry out and betray myself was due only to the fact that sight of the monstrosity risen to the surface of that subterranean lake paralyzed my voice. It was such a creature as can be dreamed of only in the wildest dreams of hashish-eaters—a bestial travesty on humanity, a creature that seemed to have been once a man, with tentacles and gills, and a terrible mouth, from which issued a series of eldritch raspings, similar to the distorted notes of a flute or oboe! When I looked again, it had vanished. I thought at once that it had risen in expectation of someone's coming, and I was not wrong—for the sound of footsteps rang down into the cavern, and in a moment someone entered the strange glowing light emanating from the subterranean lake.

It was Andrada—and in that light all those horrible batrachian characteristics of his features seemed most prominent. Without hesitation, I shot him.

What happened then is almost incredible too to set down. Andrada, mortally wounded, seemed to collapse upon himself. He fell, but the cassock hid him, for he collapsed inside it. *And then there issued from beneath the cassock a horrible, misshapen thing, a mass of convulsed flesh, which slithered and hopped, hopped and flapped toward the water's edge, expiring as it sank out of sight—leaving behind it only sandals, the empty cassock, and the ornament worn on it!—a thing like a caricature of a frog-man, arrested in evolution and molded together by some master-artist of the terrible!*

Once again the water started to churn, but already I had begun to lay dynamite charges. I did not look back; I lit the long fuse at the entrance to the cavern and ran from that place. I have heard the explosion, and my guides are nervous; I have told them they may return without me, for I know that I have no chance at all of returning along that trail alive. There left only Dr. Shrewsbury's way. I shall not see you again, and I hope only that this final communication reaches you in time. I know that what I have done

is little enough, and much remains to be done in other corners of our world if we are to preserve it from the hideous and malign powers which lie in wait forever, to return again. Farewell.

Claiborne Boyd.

V

Lima, Peru. December 7 (AP)—Despite an intensive search of the Cordillera de Vilcanota and the region around Salapunco, no trace of the body of Claiborne Boyd has been found. Boyd disappeared in mid-November, while on an expedition to study native customs and cults, according to Professor Vibberto Andros, whom Boyd visited in this city. The remains of Boyd's camp revealed only that Boyd left without taking his paraphernalia along. An empty phial was thought to have contained poison, but a chemical analysis of what remained in it revealed it to be only a serum of some kind, not fatal, though tending to paralyze and induce prolonged sleep. Investigators were unable to explain certain widespread marks about the tent, suggesting the marks of bat-wings, greatly enlarged. . . .

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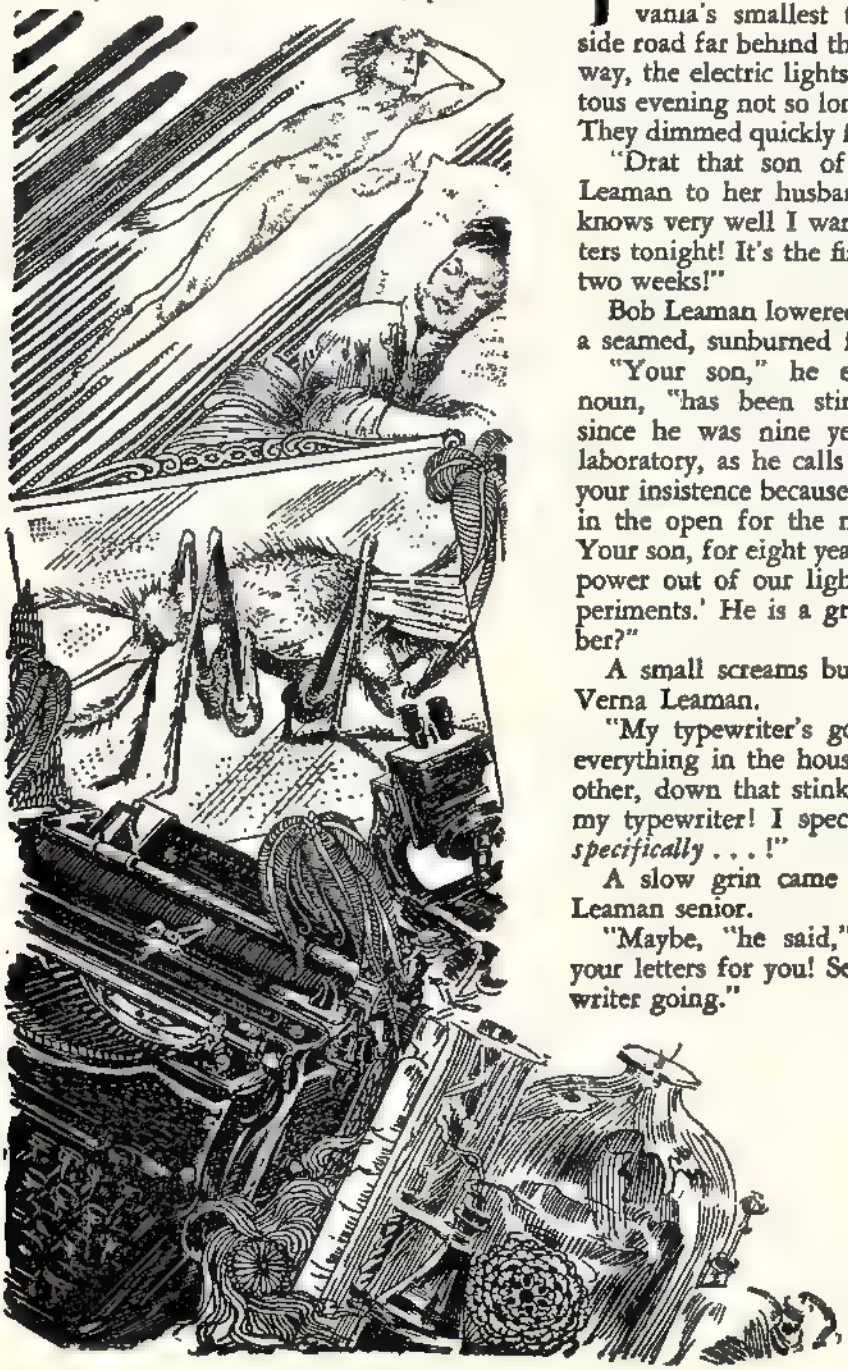
The Wizard of Bird-in-Hand

BY ARTHUR J. BURKS

These basement tinkerers can get in a lot of trouble . . . in a lot of places!



IN A little cozy two-story crowded house in Bird-In-Hand, one of Pennsylvania's smallest towns; a house on a side road far behind the main Lincoln Highway, the electric lights on a certain momentous evening not so long ago, began to fade. They dimmed quickly from yellow to red.

"Drat that son of yours!" said Verna Leaman to her husband, Bob Senior. "He knows very well I wanted to type some letters tonight! It's the first chance I've had in two weeks!"

Bob Leaman lowered the newspaper from a seamed, sunburned face.

"Your son," he emphasized the pronoun, "has been stinking up our cellar since he was nine years old! Your son's laboratory, as he calls it, is in the cellar at your insistence because we can't allow it out in the open for the neighbors to gape at. Your son, for eight years, has been dragging power out of our light circuit for his 'experiments.' He is a great inventor, remember?"

A small screams burst from the lips of Verna Leaman.

"My typewriter's gone, too! He's taken everything in the house at one time or another, down that stinking cellar, but *never* my typewriter! I specifically forbade him, *specifically* . . . !"

A slow grin came to the face of Bob Leaman senior.

"Maybe, "he said," our son is typing your letters for you! Seems I hear the typewriter going."

Heading by Vincent Napoli

If he has connected any gadgets to my typewriter, and it practically a new one," said the mother of Robert junior, the subject of the discussion, "and anything happens to it, I'll . . . I'll . . . ."

"Of course, "said the fond father and husband," he wouldn't actually type letters for you if he could do it the hard way, like creating a Frankenstein monster of the keys to do it for him! There must be something to all this industry beside the usual smell that emanates from what we used to regard as our cellar. . . ."

"Still my cellar!" snorted the mother. "Got a whole tableful of canned fruits and vegetables down there! Look, if you, his father, aren't going to make him bring back my portable. . . ."

"Let's both go," said Bob Senior. "Whatever happens to me, I always like to share it with you—even the smells in Junior's laboratory!"

So, Verna, the wife and mother, leading, and Bob Senior close behind, the heads of the house—not counting grandma, who was mostly an observer who sympathized with all sides in every question—marched to the cellar door. That their first and only son was down there they both knew. They had seen him go. He couldn't come out without being seen or heard by either or both, because of the location of the door. And he just wasn't the type of studious young man who *could* move without being *heard*.

Verna opened the cellar door. To both their ears came a confusion of sounds. The clattering, spasmodic, even more spasmodic than Verna's own "fist," of the typewriter was the lrst sound the mother sorted out. Next, the sputtering of the arc light. The ceiling bulb was dark red, like all the rest of the lights in the house.

"Bobby!" said his mother, her voice filled with vexation. "Stop hammering my typewriter with your fists! You're supposed to use at least two fingers! And stop making all the lights go out! Bobby! Bob*eeeeee*, where are you?"

The parents moved on down into the basement. The odor down there was compounded of Bill, Bobby's Collie, poisonous chemicals that nobody but seventeen-year-old Bobby could endure, charred plastic, wood, fibers, materials on which Bobby's mind had worked to their detriment. He had, Bob Senior knew, been experimenting for years to determine the effect of electric currents on different chemicals. He was especially interested in the secrets of light, sound, and electricity. That the house hadn't blown up years ago, killing everybody, the whole family regarded as proof of the beneficence of a special Providence.

"Where *is* Bobby?" said Verna, her voice rising in alarm. "He can't be anywhere but here, and he isn't here, which just doesn't make sense."

"Since when has *your* son been required to make sense?" asked Bob Senior. "Say sugar, it *is* funny, isn't it? He can't have gone out or we'd have seen or heard him or both. Yet he isn't here . . . well, let's have a look in the closet."

NEITHER seemed to notice that, in view of Bobby's absence, the behavior of Verna's typewriter was rather amazing. There was just too much to see, all at once, in Bobby's laboratory. It was, in short, a mess. To the right, at the foot of the musty steps beyond a bulb festooned with cobwebs, was a closet of wood built into a corner and one side of the cellar. It had four shoulder high doors. Two red, two blue. The two red doors were in the middle, the blues on either end. One of the red doors stood partly open, but it was one that usually *did* stand open.

Verna went and peered in the closet.

"Not in here," she said. Nothing could get in here with all this junk but cockroaches, of which same aren't any, though, because. . . ."

"They're afraid of Bobby's experiments," said Bob Senior. "They've passed the word among themselves that he likes to electrocute critters as a test of his Power Units. No cockroaches. Besides, sugar, listen! Bobby would no more leave the cellar, with all this stuff going than fly. He just never has, and there wouldn't be a first time just like this one. For instance, my love, the typewriter!"

Verna stared. Her mouth began to open wide, preparatory to a terrific scream. No scream came. Slowly, with great effort, she closed her mouth, but her eyes remained

wide, and got wider and wider. The facts of the typewriter were apparent, as they should have been from the first.

Nobody was working the keys. Yet the keys were moving, tapping out something; erratically, but tapping it out. Nobody sat in the chair before the typewriter, which had been pushed in among a conglomeration of test tubes, crucibles, U-tubes, flasks, beakers, microscopes, micrometers, home-made power units, rectifiers, pipets, slides, bowls, bottles, sandwiches, onions, apples, pencils, pads, knives, finger rings, strips of leather, rubber, plastic, burlap, canvas—the list could go on indefinitely, natural enough since it had been collected and piled over an indefinite period of time.

Nobody sat at the typewriter though it was working. There was, somehow a paean of excitement in the clattering of the keys.

The desk-table, over and around which had been built shelves enough to hold the books to which Bobby was addicted—the books above the closet included Sabatini's "Hounds of God", Sutherland's "Outsider", Grey's "Forlorn River" and a "Brief Course in Physics" by Lake and Unseld—caused a dark recess to exist just above the typewriter.

"But he can't be in there," said Bob Senior. "It's only two feet high and already filled. And he isn't under the cellar steps. And then, there is the arc light *and the glow in the U-tube!*"

Bob Senior almost screamed the last. Verna whirled on him, her mouth coming open again. If ever she got her mind made up to it there was no doubt she would scream, *loud*.

"What's with the U-tube?" she managed to ask more or less softly.

"*Your* son," he said, very slowly, very quietly, with the air of a man who always counts to a hundred before he slugs somebody or takes to his heels. "*Your* son" he repeated, has been experimenting with time. He says, and you know how serious he can say such a thing, that there are several possibilities but certainly *two*, about time into which nobody has delved at all. Mind now, I'm quoting him. He says that time can be warped, or twisted. He says there are levels of time that you can reach if you figure out how to construct the right kind of an elevator! Each century is in effect, a *floor* . . . ."

"G-wan," said Verna, "about the U-tube, while I'm thinking up a question to ask how come that arc light is pulling all the current out of our lights—and Bobby not here to show us how to disconnect it!"

"Note the U-tube," said Bob Senior, "hanging in the dark recess over the typewriter? It isn't connected with anything, far's I can see, yet there is a glow in it, like sick fireflies. Just think of that a moment or two. As for the arc light. . . ."

Father and mother looked at the arc light and the resistance unit that more or less kept it from . . . whatever Verna thought, it kept it from doing. There were gadgets she had been told, built by the strangely absent Bobby which he called Power Units, which could "boost" a hundred and ten volts to somewhere between fifty and sixty thousand, an awful lot to have in a family cellar, as well as a unit also constructed by Bobby, capable of amplifying *fifteen volts* to from ninety-two thousand to ninety-five thousand volts.

The arc light, sputtering angrily, as if threatening the whole cellar and everybody in it, rested on a chair in front of the air compressor which Bobby had constructed of an orange juice can, a blow torch, an erector set, a tin can, part of a coal-oil stove, an ironing cord and a steam gauge. The Air Compressor seemed to have some sort of hand in the laboratory's queer goings on, for the steam gauge which proved that the air compressor compressed was waggling its needle.

A whining sound come from above the Air Compressor. The parents looked up, through the screen which masked a window at ground level, into the marble-sized eyes of Bill, the beautiful collie.

"That settles it!" said Verna. "Bobby's down here, hiding somewhere, chuckling because he has us mystified. Bill wouldn't want to come down if Bobby were anywhere else. Bobby! Bob*eeee*!"

Now that the two had calmed down a little and realized themselves in the grip of something most unusual, facts began to sort themselves out in their minds. That chattering typewriter. Right after Verna yelled the loudest for "Bob*eee*" it hesi-

tated a moment then typed quickly on.

"There is some kind of a relay set attached to your portable, sugar," said Bob Senior. "I *told* you *your* son would invent a monster. . . ."

"Yes, well where's the monster? That relay set, you call it, is partly my curling irons, partly some tungsten. . . ."

"Or tantalum, or vanadium," said Bob Senior, "or silver. But it's a relay set, the least crude I've ever seen him turn out, and somehow it's working your portable. Now, if we could discover what the source of the power is, since it doesn't connect with the electric lights . . . ."

"We *could*, of course," said Verna, "take a look and see what, if anything, the typewriter is saying. There is paper in the machine, though how he got it there without using his hands I don't know, for he wouldn't have done it in such a simple manner."

"I've been thinking ever since we came into the cellar," said Bob Senior, "along those very lines. We ought to look what the typewriter is typewriting, I said to myself just like that! So, now that you've suggested it again let's *look*!"

SO, THEY looked. Verna leaned forward and lifted the far end of the piece of typewriter paper, on which these words appeared:

"Yep a telepathic typewriter assembled with relays that respond to brain waves will do the trick, and I've got just the right relays, if mom won't get just too excited about her typewriter!"

Verna turned and looked at her husband, who had been reading over her shoulder. There were incipient tears in her eyes. But she didn't say anything, not just then. The glow continued to glow in the U-tube, the arc light sputtered on, the gauge on the Air Compressor waggled its needle, Bill the collie whined from the window.

"Let Bill in," said Verna, "maybe he can see better than we can . . . or smell . . . or . . . something. . . ."

Bob Senior motioned the dog to go around to the cellar door, while the parents looked back at the typewriter and what apparently had been written before they came into the cellar.

". . . completing switch on tungsten, vanadium, tantalum or silver points, and that's all there is to it. . . ."

Bill was scratching at the cellar door. Bob Senior told him to push the door open and come on down, which Bill did. The dog stood in the approximate center of the floor, licked his nose, whined. He went into the closet through the open red door, and they could hear him digging in there. But he came out right away, still whining, with dirt on his long slim nose.

"Anyway," said Bob Senior, "the body is not buried in the closet!"

Verna's mouth, at the very idea, started to open wide again—but stopped.

"Some day you'll really scream," said Bob Senior, "and it will sound so terrible I'll leave and never come back."

They turned back to the typewriter, unable at the moment to make sense of Bill's whining, his darting this way and that, his questioning uneasiness.

"I've learned to set location and time. I can displace atoms right here in the cellar with atoms from my body and replace them anywhere in the world I want to!"

"He means," said Bob Senior, "that he can disappear here this instant and reappear somewhere else in the world—Asia if he feels like it—since he now knows how to fix the location and the time."

The typewriter clattered again. The parents looked. The words were these:

"I'll try Central Brazil first! Always wanted to see Central Brazil!"

"Central Brazil!" cried Verna. "Does he mean that's where he *is? Now?* But darling, he hasn't any passport! He hasn't any visa, either, which of course there'd be no reason for if he didn't have a passport!"

Before Bob Senior could say anything, Bill barked. They both turned, looked. Bill was looking up at a spot on the ceiling, a cobwebby beam. Bill's mouth hung open as if he were laughing. Bill, anyway, had discovered something. He kept jumping both feet off the cellar floor, dropping back, barking. He was pleased with himself.

"Bobby's model airplane!" shrieked Verna. "It's been hanging there since he was eleven! Covered with cobwebs. *And now it's gone!*"

She whirled and looked at Bob Senior, who shrugged.

"Ask Bill," he said. "The pooch knows *something*, anyway!"

II

THE GLOW IN THE U-TUBE

"HE'S trying to tell us," said Verna, awe in her voice, "that our Bobby, weight one sixty-five, has flown off somewhere, right out through the cellar window, door, or plastered walls, in the model airplane—and it nothing but a wooden P-38 frame weighing whatever it weighs? Dearest, if you're asking me to place any trust in the judgment of a collie expecting us to believe any such thing . . . ."

The typewriter, which hadn't been clattering, now clattered briefly, a bit angrily, as if the invisible force which ran it were somewhat irritated at Verna's lack of belief—in the knowledge of Bill the collie, perhaps. Bob Senior stepped to the typewriter and spelled out the words:

" *Dear Ancestors!* Blast that boy! No, no, that last is mine not the typewriter's! How does it feel, sugar, to be an ancestor?"

The typewriter, with occasional pauses which helped to identify the absent Bobby, who had never been any great shakes as a speller, clattered on.

"If you my loved ones, will sit in the chair and fold your hands so you won't get them caught in any high voltage units now in operation, I'll tell you where I am, how I got here, why I came, and the facts of the case in general."

Bob Senior looked at Verna.

"There is only one chair, he said, "the one in front of the typewriter."

Instantly the typewriter went on.

"Didn't you two ever sit on each other's laps or *vice versa?*"

Bob Senior sat, gingerly, and Verna sat on his lap well forward on his right knee, as if prepared to flee if anything went wrong, as if, in this dilemma, she scarcely knew where to place her trust.

"I've wanted to travel for years and years . . ." began the typewriter.

"Years and years!" said Verna. "And him all of seventeen his next birthday!"

"*Years and years!*" said the typewriter, underscoring the words now. "Mom, are you going to let me tell you this or do you want to write it yourself?"

There was a pause, and one of the typewriter keys remained poised as if just waiting to bat somebody down.

Bob Senior grinned. "He means what he and I both mean when we ask if we may be allowed to finish a simple sentence. He's got you out on a limb this time, sugar, so maybe you'd better listen."

"Wait until he gets back where I can get my hands on him!" said Verna, a statement which caused Bob Senior to grin, look at his slender, diminutive wife and think of his strapping, black-haired, black-eyed, serious, bespectacled but unusually muscular son, who had been threatened with dire destruction so often in his life—destruction which never went beyond threats because Verna had a very deep affection for her son.

"Now, if I may proceed," said the typewriter, "with as few interruptions as is ever possible in this most wildly regulated of all families. . . ."

"He's getting literary!" said Verna, and the typewriter paused.

"He was just mentioning interruptions, sugar," said Bob Senior. "Doubtless with some reason."

OFF to the left the arc light spluttered, filling the cellar with a glare that the Ancestors couldn't face. The steam gauge on the air compressor kept waggling its needle, the glow stayed in the U-tube while behind the Ancestors Bill the collie kept whining and almost pronouncing their names as he demanded attention.

"Bill!" said Bob Senior. "Come and watch the typewriter! Maybe you can make sense of it for us Ancestors!"

Bill came at once, put his forepaws on Verna's knees and stared at the typewriter, his ears erect, his tongue lolling.

"First," said the typewriter, "as you know, Dad, and Mom wouldn't understand—no interruptions, Mom, *puleese!*—I have always held that time is or can be warped and that if you can assemble it you can travel, in ef-

fect back and forth in it. But I despaired of finding a way to assemble it. I kept trying, since inventors have to keep trying. Then I came to the conclusion that time was not only warped but that the centuries lay in strata, like floor levels in the Empire State Building and that if I could construct a proper elevator I could visit any century, past or future, I desired. But every elevator I made required more juice than I could produce and blew all the fuses in the house. . . ."

"So *that's* why so many fuses have been blowing out during the last year!" exploded Verna.

"As if you didn't know!" said Bob Senior. "Go on, son, pardon the Ancestors. Maybe you haven't brought us up right!"

"Maybe it *is* my fault," agreed the invisible Bobby. "To continue, if you don't mind. I've been experimenting for almost a decade. . . ."

"Octogenarian!" snapped Verna.

". . . on two types of travel requiring study in the special lines in which I am interested: sound, light, electricity. I wanted to travel to South America, to an exact spot, for example. I had to figure out how I could do it and get back for ice cream and cake before going to bed!"

"Pure laziness!" said Verna. "I'd have packed a lunch for him if he had just *said* something!"

"First I figured maybe I could travel on light waves," went on the typewriter. "I needed a vehicle, of course, and thought I could activate the model P-38, since it would need very little extra work. It has never had airfoils because I never got around to covering the wings, but I felt, at the speed of light, airfoils didn't matter. However, it came to me, light travels at 186,000 miles a second, and riding a ray of light I would no more climb onto it—to put it in words capable of being understood by laymen!—than I would be away out in interstellar space somewhere. So, I realized, light was too fast. It had better be sound. But sound was too slow, unless I could rig up a propulsive arrangement that would shoot me ahead of time with ever-increasing speed, from one sound wave into the next ahead, etc., until I was really making time!"

"Simple, isn't it, sugar?" whispered Bob Senior.

"For me, yes, it was fairly simple," said the typewriter. "Last night I essayed a trial run. Didn't know it, did you? I rigged the P-38. I picked up a spot in Central Brazil, in the Campos de Ariramba where nobody lives and I wouldn't be interrupted, about a hundred miles north of the Amazon at Obidos. I wasn't so foolish as to ride the P-38 myself the very first trip, which proved good sense on my part."

"See?" said Bob Senior. "*Your* son admits that he acted with good sense!"

"I activated the P-38," said the typewriter, ignoring the interruption, "and shot it out through the back doors of a series of sound waves. I navigated it by remote control, after figuring the exact distance, the speed the P-38 would be making, and just where to cut the P-38 free of the sound waves so it would come down quite near the junction of Cebra Dente and Mutum Creeks, on the Campos de Ariramba. It was well I did not come with it. The P-38 hit the target I had selected squarely on the nose, thus proving the exactness of my calculations."

"How's he know it hit the target?" demanded Verna. "He must have awful long eyes all of a sudden!"

"The eyes of science," said the typewriter, "are indeed long eyes! But I was now deprived of my vehicle and thrown back on the second string to my bow. I use this simile, Mom, so you'll understand, you being one of the nation's archery champs! *Please!* I realized I was taking a chance, but science must take chances to advance civilization. It was now up to me to reach the wreck of the P-38, which I forgot to tell you was pretty much of a mess after it crashed. I wished to reach the wreck, which had scientific instruments of top-secret value aboard it, before some wandering Indian found it and made a Brazilian Indian tribe ruller of the world!"

"Modest!" said Bob Senior. "We've brought him up practically odorous with humility! Sugar, you think he has enough l's in 'ruller?' "

"So I had to try my atom-displacement idea. Simply, it works like this. I'm composed of atoms. By mechanics almost too profound for the layman, I believed I

could displace my physical atoms, replace them with atoms of earth, travel through the earth with the same system of navigation I used for the P-38 to the scene of the crash, displace the atoms of earth, replace the atoms of me, and there I'd be!"

"Humph!" said Verna. "It's a trick of some kind. He'll never prove to me he visited this Campos de Whatever-They-Are!"

"In the witching days of Salem," said Bob Senior, "you'd have burned your own son as a witch!"

"And *where* I'd burn him," retorted Verna, "I blush to contemplate!"

"I blush, too, being a bigger boy than you give me credit for being!" said the typewriter. "Anyhow, there were some preliminaries. The relay for the typewriter, for instance, a third string to my bow, so that if all else failed, and I got to my destination and couldn't get back, you could send a searching party to pick me up in Ariramba. Not an airplane, Dad, for there's no landing field on which a layman could land. I realized that I might be marooned between the Cebra Dente and the Mutum for a period of time, but I guarded against starvation by bringing some of your filled fruit jars with me!"

"He's taken my canned fruit!" said Verna. "And if I've told him once I've told him a dozen times, not to take any of the fruit I'm saving for winter!"

VERNA turned and looked back over her shoulder at the table behind the Ancestors, on which sat many jars, of varying heights, of fruit.

"Three jars have been tampered with!" she said. "One peach jar, one plum-prune jar and one pear jar are only half full! And as I look the last pear disappears from the pear-jar! Bob, how can he take fruit out of those jars without unscrewing the lids, and how can he, down there in Brazil somewhere, reach clear back here and steal fruit right from under his mother's nose?"

"Sorry, Mom," said the typewriter, "but I'll explain the physics of the thing later tonight, when I come home. Maybe I seem a little piggish, and am eating too much sweets, but nothing but sweets are within reach. And does the heat of the tropics make a man hungry! Just don't mind the reduced lights in your circuits, Ancestors, and before long I'll have the P-38 repaired and come home."

"But how are you going to make it, Son?" asked Bob Senior. "I can understand, somewhat dimly, how you got away from here, but don't you need special apparatus to get back?"

"Of course, but I sent it ahead of me, carefully tropic-packed, on the P-38. I'll set it up as I go along repairing the P-38, and kick myself home when everything is set. I find it a little laughable to imagine an Indian finding some of the materials I leave behind and trying to make sense of it."

"I'm glad *we* can understand, anyway," said Verna. " Aren't you, Bob?"

Bob Senior grinned. The typewriter clattered on.

"The mystery of the glow in the U-tube will now be explained," it said. "Of course I don't use everything that appears to be busy in the laboratory. I just activated them in case I might need them down here."

"Just like he activated the fruit jars!" said his doting mother.

"If you turned off all the lights in the house," said the typewriter, "and told Nanny (the grandmother) not to be scared of the dark, you would be able, both of you wearing your specks of course, to read the deathless words indited here, by the glow in the U-tube. That's why I activated it."

"I wish he'd spell activated the same way twice," said Bob Senior, "or else stop using words he can't spell. It confuses me . . . . "

The typewriter keys smashed the paper so hard they bit through the paper, and Bob Senior subsided.

"You never saw such a sky," said the typewriter. "So blue it hurts the eyes, with stars so bright and low-hung that you can hear them twinkle when you reach out your hands to possess them."

"Now he's a radio announcer trying to pad his time until the main event begins!" said Bob Senior.

"And if you don't think the main event will begin when I get my hands on that son of *yours* . . . " said Verna, running all the words together so as to make her words seem as little an interruption as possible.

"Away to the south," continued the typewriter loftily, "rolls the mighty muddy Amazon which I will not have time to visit this trip. In my ears the soft whispers of the gentle wind across the Campos de Ariramba mingle with the muted voices of the Cebra Dente and Mutum creeks. There are patches of black jungle visible near me, along the creeks, while south, between the Amazon and me, beyond the Jeremacaru River, the impenetrable jungles hide their quota of snakes, jaguars, Indians and parrots. It is a marvelous place in which to invite the sole. . . ."

"That does it!" said Bob softly. "I was beginning to think maybe we had a poet in our family, something more or less useful, until he starts inviting his sole—and can't spell it!"

"*Sole!*" repeated the typewriter, once again cutting holes in the paper with each letter and all but cutting a piece out with the underscoring . . . ". . . invite the sole other inhabitant of the moonscape on which one finds oneself. . . ."

"Now he's talking about his girl friend!" said Verna. "Do you suppose she went with him? How'd he get her down the cellar without us seeing him? And what will her family say, her gallivanting off at night with our son. . . ."

"What I'm wondering, son," said Bob Senior hastily, "is how you can be so busy repairing the P-38, and running this typewriter at the same time, as well as pausing to refresh yourself from Mom's fruit jars. Sometimes it strikes me you're over-reaching yourself!"

"The relay assembly, Father," said Bobby, or the typewriter.

"When he feels superior he always calls me 'Father'," said Bob Senior.

". . . responds to my brain waves. I simply *think* and the typewriter responds."

There was a pause. Bill, the collie, looked at Verna, then at Bob, and whined as if eager for the next installment.

"Didn't he ask us to turn out the lights?" asked Verna, during the odd pause.

"I don't think he *asked* us," said Bob. "I think he *told* us. Nanny!" he called upstairs to grandma. "Turn out all lights, all over the house, and sit in the softest chair until we locate Bobby and bring him home! That," said Bob more softly, "will keep her thoughtful until we are ready to answer questions."

Lights went out. The arc sputtered more loudly. The glow in the U-tube became a glare. The needle on the air compressor gauge danced with delight. Bill, the collie, pushed his head against Verna, pushing her back against Bob Senior's bosom, causing him, more or less automatically, to put an arm around her, whether for her protection against the unknown or because it made him feel braver he never bothered to explain.

"Sit tight," said the typewriter, "I've got the P-38 set to go. Please brush the cobwebs off the landing field! No, never mind, I haven't time to wait! Step aside, for I have to have the space between the chair and the fruit table to land on!"

There was an increased confusion of sound.

ALL at once, no more than a couple of heartbeats later, the P-38 swung once more from its hook in the ceiling of the cellar—swung and swung. While Bobby Leaman, seventeen, heavily dark eyebrows and all, black unruly hair and all, the whole husky person of him, stood between the fruit jars and the typewriter, facing the latter, and Bill, the collie, was trying to eat him alive.

Slowly, his face a spectacled grin, Bobby looked left at his father, right to his open-mouthed mother. To the latter he extended a large bouquet of strange weeds and flowers. She took them, unable to say a word, and Bobby spoke for the first time without using the typewriter—or did he?

"If these posies," said Bobby Junior, "can be found anywhere in the world except the Campos de Ariramba, I'll eat them, and they may be poison, for all I know!"

Then, a little startled, Bobby turned and looked at the typewriter which had clattered right along with him as he spoke.

"*If these posies,*" the typewriter had written, "*can be found anywhere in the world except the Campos de Ariramba, I'll eat them, and they may be poison, for all I know. I realize I must prove everything!*"

"You didn't say you had to prove everything," said Bob Senior, after the family had crowded together to read the words.

"No," said Bobby Junior, "but I thought it! What else I think, maybe I'd better keep to myself by turning off the relay!"

Which he proceeded to do. Then he grinned at his mother.

"I'm sorry I couldn't replace the peaches, the prune-plums and the pears, Mom," he said, "but they simply don't have any on the *campos*. So I had to replace 'em with a jungle fruit called *carambola!*"

Verna looked at the three jars which had been empty just prior to the arrival of Bobby Junior from the Campos de Ariramba.

They were tightly packed with what looked to be a yellowish, but strange, and somewhat messy, fruit!

III

MONEY IN THE BANK

SLOWLY, with a stunned expression on her face, Verna turned away from the jars of *carambola* and stared at her son.

"Bobby!" she said. "Your face and hands! They're all speckled!"

"Bites," said Bobby. "Something bit me while I was repairing the P-38. Mosquitoes, I thought. But I concentrated on what I was doing and didn't allow them to disturb me too much. Of course, they . . ."

Bobby appeared to decide maybe he hadn't better tell them whatever he had had in mind to tell them, and turned back to his desk.

"Dad, Mom," he said portentiously. "We can be the richest people in the world. I believe I can go straight to gold and diamond deposits at any time, and take what we need, bringing it back here without having to say anything to Customs or anybody. . . ."

"Would that be honest?" said Verna. "Seems there is a law."

"We won't break it," said Bobby Junior, "but I was just planning in a general way. However, Dad, in order that you two can help me if I get into difficulties in future trips to Brazil, Asia, or the South Seas—Easter Island, maybe—I'd better explain a little of what gives. First, I managed to work out an exact formula whereby I could displace my physical atoms here, replace them beside the wreck of the P-38 on the Campos de Ariramba, where I had previously sent the P-38 on a trial flight, with replicas of instruments aboard, instruments used here to cause the flight. To displace my individual atoms I made use of this. . . ."

He took a glass flask from the inside pocket of his jacket, and held it up.

"My atomizer!" said his mother. "All these years I've used it, or one like it, and never once was afraid it might turn me into . . ."

"Coincidence, Mom," said Bobby, holding up his free hand to quiet her. "The atomizer gave me an idea, but only insofar as it provided me with a receptacle I could use. There is no connection between the atomizer as you understand it, and the atom displacement to which I refer. It's simply . . ."

"If there is no connection," said his mother, "how about handing me back my atomizer, and explaining what you did with the stinkum that was in it?"

"If I handed it back to you," said Bobby, drawing it away over one shoulder, "and you happened to twist the stopper which I have affixed to its mouth, you might disappear and never be seen again—unless you first knew what to do in such a case. The atomizer contains no stinkum at the moment. What it *does* contain is a tiny spot of uranium ore. Never mind where I got it. It also contains a spot of carnotite, radium ore, all of which, bottle, stopper, uranium and carnotite, have been treated by a special Bobby Leaman process, so that I can displace my atoms at any time I twist this stopper . . ." he grasped it carefully with thumb and forefinger, "and bring the uranium, carnotite, the arc light—protected by its resistance unit—into the proper juxtaposition, thus. . . ."

ALL at once there was nothing remaining of Bobby Leaman, except his voice, which appeared to precede from somewhere just below the cellar floor. But the U-tube glowed more brightly now, and the arc light flared into increased and noisier activity.

"I'm not going anywhere," said Bobby's voice, "just demonstrating. "I'm right here, part of the cellar floor. But I could have been back on the Campos de Ariramba just as easily. I'd prove it to you if I had the typewriter relay assembly attached, so we could keep in touch. Now, Mom, this isn't

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easy, but once you have learned to, in effect, compress time, and thereafter travel, into thousandths of seconds instead of seconds, space also vanishes. That's why, either from here as part of the cellar, or down in the Campos de Ariramba, I can apparently do tricks—which aren't tricks at all—with your fruit jars! For instance, I'll have a few more pears!"

Verna whirled and looked at her fruit table. Before her eyes a jar of pears disappeared. Before she could more than point a finger the jar was back, half-empty!

"I took the jar away, unscrewed the top, ate, screwed the top back on, returned it," said Bobby's special part-of-the-cellar voice.

"Why couldn't you take some of the *carambola?*" demanded his mother. "How do we know anybody else in the family will eat the stuff?"

"I'm coming back now," said Bobby, and there he was, grinning. He looked at his mother and deliberately licked his wet fingers.

"Nobody's canned pears can hold a candle to your's, Mom," he said. "Now, like I told you, I left some equipment on the Campos de Ariramba, in order that you folks might have a look at some of the marvelous things I saw. Now here, inside the closet, against the back wall . . ."

Bobby returned the atomizer to the shelf above the typewriter, noted how his mother's determined eyes fixed its location in mind, thought better of it and returned it to his pocket. Then he opened all four of the doors to the closet. As he did so, Bob Senior's eyes lifted to a dusty model steamer in the corner atop the closet, serving as a glorified book-end.

"How come you don't use that model for something, son?" asked Bob Senior. "Too slow for you?"

"I'm going to use it, when I'm ready to begin interplanetary travel!" said Bobby. "Steamers are sort of antiquated, but I'll have to accept the role of pioneer at first, and use whatever comes to hand!"

"Sorry I asked!" said Bob Senior hastily. "I interrupted you!"

Bobby Junior, with all the closet doors opened, the two middle red ones, the end blue ones, reached into the shadow behind

and dragged a lot of gear away to right and left. The back wall of the closet was plainly a television screen, but that wasn't what Verna recognized it as!

"My beautiful silver mirror, given me for Christmas by the man I didn't have sense enough to marry, taking your pa instead!" said Verna. "And here, when it disappeared, I reported it to the police as a robbery and for all I know they may have sent some innocent man to the chair for stealing it!"

"Stealing your mirror isn't murder, sugar," said Bob Senior. "Anyway, now you know where it is, let the boy talk."

"I've bent waves so they'll travel around the earth instead of shooting straight off into space," said Bobby, "but the advanced set I've developed still has bugs in it. It produces everything in reverse, so I have to reflect the pictures in the mirror to make them make sense. When I get it straightened out I'll donate it to television—and return your mirror, Mom!"

"Can't you donate the mirror to television, too, son?" asked Bob Senior. "Or transfer it to your advanced base in the Campos de Ariramba?"

"I've got everything here," said Bobby. "And now, while operating my Leaman Television Set—you know, I expected to use it for contact if the telepathic typewriter didn't work. . . ."

"The collie knew!" said Bob Senior. "He went digging in the closet!"

"Bill's smart," said Bobby proudly. "I'm planning to rig up some attachments to him that will duplicate collies, so I can give an exact, living copy of Bill to each of my friends, including my girl friend. Of course, we'll have to keep all the collies apart, since they'll all really be Bill, and it will be confusing . . . but never mind that just now. That's on the agenda for the future, and Bill is just being readied for it. My air Compressor there, the U-Tube, the arc-light, all now operate on a specially arranged and treated bundle of calcium floride, a type of carbon, incased in lead set into the cellar wall behind the mirror."

"If I knew where the lead came from," said Bob Senior, "I'd probably wish I didn't!"

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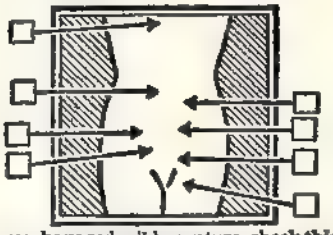

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ments with the ultra violet rays," said Bobby, "and have developed a special chemical, as a result of exhaustive treatment of *many* chemicals by electricity, which I have introduced as the core of the central segment of calcium floride. In effect, I have a new ray, having no connection with ultra violet, but inspired by it. The thing works only when electrical energy, balanced by compressed air forced into the calcium floride core, bent through the U-tube yonder, coalesces to perfect my television system."

"Sugar," said Bob Senior, "just before Junior was born, were you much interested in the technical designs published by Rube Goldberg?"

"Don't make fun of Rube, Dad," said Bobby Junior sharply. "He's a genius. His brain children of today will be the mental giants of a new day in the future! Well, anyway, let's have a look at my new domain. There'll be sound, too, naturally!"

"Naturally," said Bob Senior. "You wouldn't leave out anything!"

The four investigators assumed the positions indicated by Bobby. Bill, the collie, lying on his belly, peered into the closet through the right blue door, Bob Senior through the next door left, the right red one, Bobby Junior through the left red door, Verna through left end blue door. All four, thus prone, peered into the blackness of the closet.

AT THIS point, unknown to the investigators, Grandma Nanny came to the head of the cellar steps, peered down, hands on knees, then sat on the top step, still scrooched forward, to listen even if she couldn't see anything. She had eavesdropped on the last part of Bobby's exposition of scientific principles, and to Grandma they sounded reasonable enough, as did practically everything Bobby said or did. She didn't understand any of it, but it *did* sound reasonable.

The house lights were still out.

The Leaman Televisor began working.

Into the cellar on Leaman Drive came the roaring of wind from far-off Campos de Ariramba.

"It was coming up strong when I left," said Bobby, "threatening a hurricane."

Pictures began appearing on the screen, in the mirror, rather.

First were the technical instruments beside a monolith of gray stone. . . .

"P-38 crashed on the rock," said Bobby. "I didn't know it was there when I worked out the navigational problems of time and location. I could explain the instruments."

"Later," said Bob Senior, his voice so strange it sounded to Grandma, on the stairs, as if *Bill* had spoken. Grandma shrugged, not surprised at anything that came out of Bobby's cellar laboratory.

"Let's take a look at the rapids of the Jeremacaru," said Bobby, adjusting his machinery. "I didn't get a chance to visit them, and I understand they are gorgeous."

A movement as of travel across a rocky landscape, through patches of wood, around piles of boulders, with a roaring sound growing in the cellar the whole time, and there was white water tumbling wildly and deafeningly over a series of falls. It was majestic, seen even by moonlight. As the family of Leaman watched, fish jumped out of the rapids, showed for a few seconds spinning then dropped back.

"What kind of fish, Bobby?" asked Bob Senior.

"Piranhas!" said Bobby.

To Grandma, parked on the top step, watching her family peering into the closet on the cellar floor, the conversation had something in it that made her shiver. There were times when she felt that enough was almost too much. She had never heard of *piranhas*, but if they were fish she was almost positive none of them were jumping around in the odds and ends closet. She resolved to slip down tomorrow, on pretext of cleaning the place, and look around. Fish in a cellar, if forgotten, could make a cellar smell worse than this one always did when Bobby was experimenting at his most feverishly.

The scene shifted again as Bobby took his parents and Bill, the collie, around over enough of the Campos de Ariramba to maintain their interest. He showed them Cebra Dente Creek and let them listen to it. He showed them Mutum Creek, under its border of gnarled trees, let them listen to its roaring, to the cheeping of birds in the

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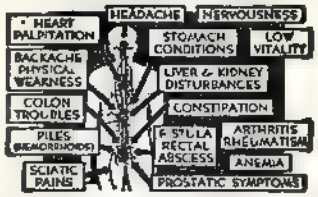

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trees, to the hunting cry of a jaguar among the rocks where only stunted brush grew.

Then he switched back to the instruments he had left near the rocky monolith, and Bob Senior said:

"There's a little static in your machine, isn't there, son? I keep hearing a buzzing, humming sound, especially around where you left your scientific instruments."

"Mosquitoes!" said Bobby promptly. "Small ones, hanging around where they worked on me, waiting and hoping for me to go back! Look, I can adjust my microscopic lens so as you can look closely at those mosquitoes."

Grandma had had enough. She was positive there were neither jaguars, creeks, woods, fish or mosquitoes in the cellar, certainly not in the odds and ends closet.

Angrily, she rose, attracting the attention of the Leaman family, making them look sheepishly, including Bill, the collie, at one another. Grandma went through the house, turning on all the lights.

A weird kind of pandemonium broke loose. The glow in the U-tube died away. The air compressor went sour and the needle gauge oscillated like mad. The arc-light sputtered so fearfully that Bob Senior jumped up in alarm.

"Turn off all power, Dad," said Junior, his voice sounding eerie and far away. "And get me upstairs!"

Not until he had his son undressed, changed into his night shirt, and in bed, did Bob Senior stop to think. Then he refused to think. He had a very sick son on his hands.

Rolling and tossing, Bobby Junior was babbling in delirium.

"Get the family doctor," said Verna, "though what he'll think about it, all Heaven only knows!"

IV

PROOF OF PUDDING

THE doctor, sitting beside Bobby's bed, shook out a thermometer with his left hand while he took Bobby's pulse with the other. Bobby's face was very red. His breathing was stertorious. He was as hot

as a firecracker. The doctor stuck the thermometer under Bobby's tongue.

Bobby was living over his recent experiences in Brazil.

"Near at hand," said Bobby, "I hear the roaring voice of Cebra Dente Creek, Cebra Dente meaning Broken Tooth, while further away is Mutum Creek which, interpreted, means Wild Turkey Creek. . . ."

The doctor raised his head to meet the eyes of Bob Senior and Verna. Bob Senior started to explain, but even to him the words had a peculiar sound. Bobby wasn't increasing their social standing with the doctor by the things he said.

"Your kid couldn't have delirium tremens, could he?" asked the doctor.

"Of course not!" snapped Verna. "He's too young to drink. He's never even tasted strong liquor! Why, the nearest he comes to liquor is when he passes saloons, going to work!"

"Our son," said Bob Senior, "could have delirium tremens! Passing a saloon is close enough for him! He's a genius!"

Incoherently, but certainly, while the doctor listened to each word, Bobby lived over the experiences of the evening and night. He missed nothing, and the doctor became more and more interested. He took off his coat, his hat, rubbed his hands through his sparse gray hair. He was excited as he listened to the delirious recital. He took the thermometer out of Bobby's mouth, after awhile, looked at it:

"A-humph!" he said. "A mite high! Hundred and seven!"

Bill the collie, sure of his welcome, entered the room, whined, thrust a cold nose into Bobby's hot red hand which dangled over the edge of the bed. Bill's presence conveyed itself to Bobby's subconscious, reminding him. . . .

"I'm readying Bill," he said, "for a scheme I have on the agenda for the future. I'm going to rig attachments on him so I can duplicate him, and provide each of my friends, and my girl friend, with a replica of Bill. It poses a simple mathematical problem. . . ."

Verna and Bob Senior exchanged glances. Worried though they were over Bobby's mysterious illness, resulting obviously from

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his journey into the weird unknown, they couldn't help wondering what the doctor would think of all this, and what he would say to his other patients who were their neighbors.

When the doctor then made a brief statement they were even less sure what went on.

"Theoretically sound," said the doctor. "I could figure out how to do it myself—duplicate the collie, I mean! Here, Bill, let me look at you! You're a beauty, all right, smart, too. Listen, Leaman, that's how you can pay my bill—have the kid make me a duplicate of Bill here!"

"Look, Doctor," said Bob Senior, "what's wrong with the kid?"

"Nothing time won't cure," said the doctor. "Now, let's see this laboratory he rants about."

"For Pete's sake, why?" exploded Bob Senior. "He needs medicine, a prescription, and you want to see his laboratory."

"Mentions it in his ravings, doesn't he?" said the doctor. "Then it's part of his sickness, so I have to see it to be able to diagnose. Besides, I've a laboratory of my own in my own basement—if my wife hasn't smashed it up again!"

A few minutes later Bob Senior, Verna and the doctor were down in the basement. The doctor studied the mess in the cellar.

"Humph!" said the doctor. "Arc-light, with a resistance dingus just like mine. Made it himself, too, with better luck than I have. I'll have to get him well, I guess, so I can ask him how to make it work! And there is a relay assembly, could be affixed to an adding machine or maybe a typewriter, though just what for I wouldn't know without asking. Where's his television set?"

"For pity's sake, what do you care?" asked Verna. "We didn't ask you here to show you his laboratory, but to make him well!"

"Show me!" insisted the doctor.

THEY opened the doors to the closet again. The doctor studied the mirror, lying on his belly on the floor just as had the whole family, except Grandma, earlier in the evening. The doctor rose, studied the gadgetry in the cellar, humming a little tune to himself as he did so. He appeared to have forgotten all about his patient. In a few min-

utes he had set the arc-light going, restored the glow to the U-tube, set the needle of the air compressor to waggling. He seemed to know Bobby's stuff as well as Bobby did.

Then he looked into the television mirror and twisted gadgets Bob Senior and Verna had seen Bobby twist—and there appeared the monolith on Campos de Ariramba against which the P-38 had crashed, and where Bobby had worked for some little time to repair it.

The doctor was delighted.

"This humming sound, this static," he said, "what did the kid say about it?"

"He said it was mosquitoes!" said Bob Senior.

"I know it's mosquitoes," said the doctor testily, "now I want to know what kind. There must be a microscopic lens somewhere. Ah, here is the adjustment. Good, some of them still hanging around, waiting for some more of Bobby's good, rich blood. Yep, they're anopheles mosquitoes."

Quickly the doctor rose, shut off all the machinery, then wrote a prescription for Bobby. Bob Senior and Verna stared at it.

The prescription called for atabrine only, with instructions as to how many, and when, the tablets were to be given.

"Atabrine!" said Bob Senior. "But that's for malaria, isn't it?, Nonsense there hasn't been malaria in Bird-in-Hand for decades."

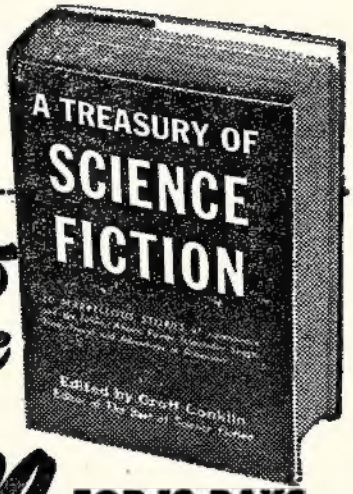
"No," said the doctor, "no. But remember, your son has just returned from Brazil, where there is plenty of the stuff!"

Bob Senior snorted.

"I've read up on malaria," he said. "You don't get it in less than seven days after being bitten by the right vectors, inoculated with the disease. The time is more likely to be longer than three weeks!"

The doctor grinned briefly.

"You forget, folks," he said. "Your son is a genius! Somewhere in his journey tonight he picked up that time warp he was talking about and by the purest coincidence might have contracted malaria *before* the mosquitoes bit him! Humph! Smart kid, able to get malaria faster'n anybody else in the world. He'll go *far*, that boy, *far!* Don't forget to give him that atabrine series, and remember to hold back my duplicate of Bill, the collie! Goodnight!"



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